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GOD AND PAIN

GEORGE STEWART

By GEORGE STEWART

God and Pain
The Incarnation in Our Street
The Crucifixion in Our Street
The Resurrection in Our Street
Redemption: An Anthology of the Cross
The Life of Henry B. Wright
History of Religious Education in Connecticut
Protestant Europe: Its Crisis and Outlook
(*In Collaboration with Adolf Keller*)

GOD AND PAIN

By

GEORGE STEWART

"L'homme est un apprenti,
la doleur est son maitre."
MUSSET

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To

MARGARET HAZARD FISHER

Through whose Gracious Friendship
a Host of hard-pressed
Men and Women have found God
Adequate in the Midst of Pain.

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GOD AND PAIN

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God and Pain

In nearly all of Rembrandt's paintings certain high lights reveal the features of the central characters, but often in the brooding mystery of the dark background are retreating figures, faintly indicated, sometimes with faces half turned as if to make their identity even more enigmatical. Rembrandt had suffered and realized that life is surrounded by mystery. All who have borne the mark of pain have felt the presence of dark indefinable afflictions difficult to name and appraise. Their sources ofttimes evade scrutiny, as Rembrandt's escaping figures are shrouded in the gloomy night.

The presence of pain in a morally ordered cosmos has tortured the minds of the reflective of every generation. Tyranny of strong men over weak, abuse of privilege, contempt of the clever for the uncouth, the gentle scorn of the well-born for the son of the people, unfair discrimination, inherited bodily or temperamental weaknesses, all present sharp spiritual crises which demand attention. Pain, this thorn in the side of man, the perplexity of evil, is placed for solution where all nettlesome

problems are finally left, at heaven's gate. If God is not to blame for evil, then who?

Along the line of that inevitable question, does God send tribulation, some helpful insights are possible, allowing that with the best human perception much is shrouded in mystery.

A careful scrutiny of human woes reveals that they cannot fairly be classed together.

Intentional evil on the part of one's self, on the part of other men, or upon the part of God, looms large to the battered sons of men.

Scrutinize the evil which we may say is caused by man himself as a free agent. Only a few contemporary philosophers would hold that man is a completely determined automaton. He may be limited, but he is free within those limits. William James' checkerboard illustration is an appealing one. James conceived the problem of freedom as if you were on one side of a checkerboard and God on the other. He knows all the thousand and one possible moves that you might make, while you, on the other hand, find freedom enough within the thousand and one possibilities before you. After all allowance has been made for heredity, bad schooling, parental neglect, and evil companionship, there are in all cases, not decidedly psychopathic, large areas of personal responsibility, and when one views certain forms of evil one can see that oneself and not God is to blame.

By the same token of moral responsibility, we see much evil for which others are blameworthy. The vulgarity and obscenity ever present to pollute the mind of youth, the presence of the non-medical traffic in drugs and in liquor, the ghouls who buy and sell the bodies of women and girls, the loss of privacy and consequently the loss of respect for others which gradually comes under too close and too constant contact in over-crowded tenements, the degradation due to remedial poverty, the fear of unjust discharge, of unemployment, of dependent old age,—these are forms of evil and sources of pain for which men and groups are responsible.

Society as a whole is recognizing that it is responsible for much needless suffering. Old age pensions, profit sharing, participation of all creative elements in the control of industry, the removal of the fear of unemployment by eliminating periods of over-productivity, removing the causes of industrial disease and accidents, public health service, better schooling and the outlawry of war by every appropriate means, are all based upon the philosophy that, under any régime human or divine, I am my brother's keeper. Men everywhere recognize that there is a deal of suffering due to the ill will or greed or negligence of others, which is man-caused and avoidable.

Again, not a few continue to blame God for some classes of intentional evil. Those who claim too

much for God are in as bad a predicament as those who claim too little. In Ansky's play *The Dybbuk*, an astounding mystical piece, based upon the life of the Chassidic Jews of Galicia, a dialogue occurs among three paid mourners, which illustrates this point. They are discussing the Great Antagonist and one remarks that even that diabolical person cannot be altogether bad. He is instantly challenged, but replies with inescapable logic that, if God is all-powerful and has made everything, He must have made the Great Antagonist also, and if God created him, he could not be altogether evil. The next inference is inescapable, that God must be responsible for a certain amount of pain and suffering.

Omar Khayyam accused God as the source of earth's sorrows, in bitter quatrains:

"Oh, Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Rood I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my fall to Sin:

"Oh, Thou, who man of Baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take."

Jeremiah was pondering the same dark problem in his figure of the potter and the clay, when he has the Lord saying, "O House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as

the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand." The same figure is employed by Aristophanes in one of his plays, wherein a water pot is bantered because of its impotency.

As one attempts to reconcile the presence of evil in a world presumably governed by an Almighty and kindly Heavenly Father, one is forced to find some philosophical justification for the spirit of frustration and negation we have personified as the devil. In that primeval hour when God contemplated the universe, the alternatives were either to make man an automaton who should be determined by a higher decree and leave him no freedom, thus relieving him of all moral responsibility, or to leave man free to be tempted and schooled and disciplined by the consequences of his own choices.

The devil himself might protest against the accusations brought against him, when he, as the embodiment of the spirit of mistake and error and willful wrongdoing, was part of the original setting for the moral drama by which mankind was to be educated and redeemed, not as marionettes are made to dance at another's bidding, but by the choice of men and women free enough for all moral purposes and for all human activity, within the ample limitation of human existence. Not a few have sought to relieve the devil of the usual blame heaped upon him.

In law God is made responsible for many disasters. The unforeseen crash of steamers in a fog, the result of navigating in foggy weather, floods caused by immoderate rainfall, the trembling of a mountain devastating fair cities and fruitful fields, the result of the gradual development of enormous pockets of steam or chemical reaction beneath the earth, are called "acts of God." Should God be held responsible if men take chances with dumb inanimate nature, with the crude unmoral forces in the interplay of which we live upon this tiny planet? God cannot be identified with nature, the voice of nature is not the voice of God. The voice of nature is uncertain—now nature blesses with golden harvests, now it curses with hurricanes and floods and gushing mountains of fire.

Kipling, beholding the wholesale denunciation of God for woes, brought on by human sin or error or the dumb and fatal working of nature's law, wrote his searching lines on *Natural Theology*. The primitive man cries out:

I ate my fill of a whale that died
  And stranded after a month at sea . . .
There is a pain in my inside.
  Why have the Gods afflicted me?
Ow! I am purged till I am a wraith!
  Wow! I am sick till I cannot see!
What is the sense of Religion and Faith?
  Look how the Gods have afflicted me!

The medieval man complains,

> My privy and well drain into each other
> After the custom of Christendie. . . .
> Fevers and fluxes are wasting my mother.
> Why has the Lord afflicted me?
> The Saints are helpless for all I offer—
> So are the clergy I used to fee.
> Henceforward I keep my cash in my coffer,
> Because the Lord has afflicted me.

But Kipling concludes,

> This was none of the good Lord's pleasure,
> For the Spirit He breathed in Man is free;
> But what comes after is measure for measure,
> And not a God that afflicted thee.
> As was the sowing so the reaping
> Is now and evermore shall be.
> Thou art delivered to thy own keeping.
> Only Thyself hath afflicted thee!

A broad area of pain and suffering falls within intentional evil, that which is caused by oneself, or by others, or which can properly be said to be caused by God.

Unintentional evil comprises a second wide field of human affliction, accidents and mishaps, encountered in our imperfect adjustments to the physical and biological world in which we live.

Gravitation, which causes bricks to fall upon the just and the unjust, that dependable force which holds the minute portions of our earth together, is the same force that draws the child, left by a careless mother upon a fire escape, in its fatal course

toward the ground and death. Malignant as well as benignant armies of micro-organisms, serving a far-off biological end, destroy or protect the righteous or the wicked with equal indifference. We find in the natural laws and sequences, the order and continuity of nature a trustworthy and dependable world, but one capable of bringing sorrow to those who violate its ways of working.

All one can say about this second category of tribulation is that no one is to blame. There is pain which comes as an inevitable consequence of existence upon this planet. The surest method of protecting a child against doubt in this field is to have him understand that he is living in a dependable but dangerous universe.

A third classification of human misery is *disciplinary suffering*. In this area one can truly say that "All things work together for good to those that serve the Lord."

It is significant that the term tribulation literally means beating out grain upon the threshing floor. In most sensitive hearts at times there is an authentic appreciation of the hand of God shaping us until we are fit for companionship with Him, for "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." We are in tribulation ofttimes for some high purpose. Discipline by pain and loss and disappointment often prepares us for more ample achievements.

Two very practical considerations arise when sor-

row or loss, accident or disease, puts a shadow upon life.

The first is to help the sufferer to see that we are adventurers in a difficult and dangerous world. God offers no guarantees of ease or comfort, no assurances of a sound body or an unbroken heart. He does offer to struggle with us and to save in us all that is like Him.

Again, it helps for the sufferer to allocate to the proper category the affliction under which he is laboring. It is useless for a careless father who has neglected and ill-treated his children, to blame God if they cease to love him. It is futile for a mother to complain that God loves her not if, through her carelessness, a child develops pneumonia. If men will rebuild villages on the side of Fujiyama and Vesuvius, is God to blame when white hot rivers of molten lava envelop whole countrysides? It is easier to hold fast one's faith if one is able to fix responsibility for one's sufferings, or to understand that no one is to blame.

No one has been able to deal adequately with these dark problems. Job, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the whole long list of philosophers have each brought illumination, but much remains shrouded in darkness.

The cosmic struggle between good and evil is dramatized in the tragedies of Euripedes, Sophocles and Thucidydes; it is the theme of the *Divine Com-*

edy and *Paradise Lost*; Shakespeare showed it in parable in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*; it is revealed in the novelists of every generation. In Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Case of Mr. Crump*, the husband, goaded to madness, strikes down his wife and then realized that in their life these forces had been at work. When Crump, goaded at last to madness, slays his mate, a certain calmness possessed him: "Quietly he went to the window and opened it and looked up at the stars. If the universe was a mere mechanism and we but accidental crawlers on this planet's crust, neither deeds done nor undone mattered and love and hate and cruelty and mercy and rancor and justice were indistinguishably one. But if this were not so, if—were it only by a slow process of becoming—the universe strove, like man himself, for values beyond the dust, then he had helped to reëstablish the shaken moral equilibrium of the world, to save cosmos from chaos, to make justice prevail. A little earlier he had wondered at this tendency of his to ally his small troubles to the eternal nature of things and to drag the universe into his tiny conflicts."

The true philosopher and the true believer sees his Lilliputian campaigns, defeats and victories projected upon the cosmic struggle of the universe. In the spiritual sense he is aligning himself with a struggling Christ Who said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," becoming part of that labor-

ing and pain-racked race which gropeth and travaileth, for the perfect day.

When one sees that one is a part of a titanic battlefront, that one is valuable in the mighty conflict, one will find joy enough and courage enough to carry one through the whirling flood of doubt and despair and land him on the shore of faith.

Our tiny efforts are small replicas of the universal battle and our feeble human forms assume new dignity and new worth and the tragedy and comedy of life are exalted into heroic proportions when we become willing servants and co-workers with a God Who Himself struggles against sin and pain and loves even unto death upon the bitter cross.

The School of Pain

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."—*Hebrews* 5:8.

Suffering is the only school master to whom all must listen. Experience is a dear teacher yet one at whose feet all must sit but from whom only receptive hearts can learn. It is significant that even Jesus went to the school of pain. The heat of summer, the blasts of winter, the weariness of long hours upon the road, the fatigue of listening to endless stories of sin and degradation, the labor of healing and reëstablishing human life, the hurt of the bitter jibe, the crown of thorns, the cruel iron in the naked flesh, were as real and poignant to Him as to any of the children of men. But there are uses for dark things, a harvest even from the field of pain. Son of God though He was, He learned by what He suffered, how to obey.

Many of the responses which we make to situations are due to pleasure or to pain. If a mouse or a turtle is placed in an artificial maze and given two roads out, one of which results in an electric shock and the other in food, it will soon learn by trial-and-success to take the road that leads to pleasure and to avoid the road that leads to pain. In many of our adjustments pain quickly

teaches us to make an appropriate response to a particular situation. The burned child avoids the fire.

But life is not always as simple as finding a way out of an artificial maze, for we are dealing with other people who have minds of their own, with whom we are apt to run amuck. In addition unseen hosts of disease germs beset us, and inanimate nature often hurts us as we fling ourselves upon it in an effort to wrest a living from the soil. As a consequence there is anguish of heart and bodily pain. Maarten Maartens wrote to William Robertson Nicoll on January 23, 1901: "Yet, look at my wife—always racked by rheumatism in the head, always bright. Women can do that sort of thing—rare women. Had Job been a woman there would have been no Book of Job, for she would simply have sat down in the muck-heap and said: 'How good God is!'" But there are many who find it difficult to look out upon a world of pain and say that God is good.

Paul realized the discipline of suffering. He had been in danger of bandits, in danger of false brethren; thrice was he beaten with rods; a night and a day he had been in the deep. He knew the seamy side of life. He bore branded on his body the marks of Jesus, marks made by facing hard experiences in all weathers, and he wrote to his friends: "The pain God is allowed to guide ends in a saving repentance never to be regretted." Out of

the anguish of life this man gained a refinement of spirit that made him Paul who, save its founder, has proved to be the greatest leader of the Christian Church. The writer to the Hebrews had made a close study of Jesus' life and found there the fruits of suffering. "Thus, Son though He was, He learned by all He suffered, how to obey." A man who for fifty years has battled in the cause of cleanness and honesty, recently exclaimed: "If ever I get to heaven it will be as a battered and scarred veteran, but I cannot regret the bruises." We learn by all we suffer, how to obey.

We are schooled through the suffering that comes through disappointment.

Many are disappointed with life in general. They had hoped for more than they have received; they were disappointed as children, and are left unsatisfied as men. As Byron wrote of Lara:

> With more capacity for love than earth
> Bestows on most of mortal mold and birth,
> His early dreams of good outstripped the truth,
> And troubled manhood followed baffled youth.

Yes, our dreams may outstrip what we behold now—God help us if they do not!—for who wants to be content with the present world in which we live? The spiritual use of disappointment is to have it in some way stimulate the believer to hope on and finally to create the City of God. He who never dreams or hopes will never be disappointed, but he

will never create. It is so easy to be disappointed with life in general. Dishonest government, an unjust social order, restricted and Chauvinistic ideas of patriotism, the immensely complex questions raised by our industrial civilization, the new intensity of social problems consequent upon our congested urban populations, and the inability of youth to develop normally in our over-crowded cities, have all caused many thoughtful people to be disappointed with life in general.

Will Hereford describes the corroding cynicism which settles upon many who find the unequal distribution of wealth, the haphazard and irrational visitation of good or bad fortune, the unreasonable and unpredictable elements of life, cause them to become doubtful as to whether there is a just and righteous God above the human tangle.

This is the Earth that God made.
These are the Timber and Coal and Oil
And Water Powers and Fertile Soil
That belong to us all in spite of the gall
Of the Grabbers and Grafters who forestall
The natural rights and needs of all
Who live on the Earth that God made.

These are the Corporate Snakes that coil
Around the Timber and Coal and Oil
And Water Powers and Fertile Soil
Which belong to us all in spite of the gall
Of the Grabbers and Grafters who forestall
The natural rights and needs of all
Who live on the Earth that God made.

These are the Lords of Mill and Mine
Who act as if they were divine,
Who can't read the writing on the Wall
But admire the skill and excuse the gall
Of the Grabbers and Grafters who forestall
The natural rights and needs of all
Who live on the Earth that God made.

These are the Parsons shaven and shorn
Who tell the workers all forlorn
To pray for Contentment night and morn
And to bear and to suffer want and scorn
And be lowly and meek and humbly seek
For their reward on the Heavenly shore,
But not on the Earth that God made.

Many suffer because they are bitterly disappointed in the organization of life in general.

Men also suffer because they are disappointed in individuals. There is a group of realists abroad among Christians as well as among pagans, who say: "Do not expect too much of fellow human beings. Do not believe in them too much, and then you will not be disappointed." Our quarrel with these realists is not that they see life as it is—every one should do that—but rather that they lack imagination and the faith in human beings to see what they may become. Many a person living on a low plane must be loved into the Kingdom of God. He must be made to see that it makes a difference to some one if he goes to the devil. He must be shown that some one is willing to risk a broken spirit that he may live clean, and true, and honest. Of course, great believers are sorely disappointed. Jesus was

the greatest believer in men and was probably more keenly disappointed than any one else, but by His disappointment dull men were raised up to be saints and to carry the Gospel to the then known world. We learn by the disappointments we suffer, how to obey.

We grieve at false friends, ungrateful children, careless or domineering parents, tyrannical employers, but we learn by suffering at their hands that obedience to love is the only salvation from developing hatred, envy, and strife. Many find a rather unresponsive world: no one seems to give back their friendship and affection; associations they long for do not develop; ice seems to form in the stream of life and love becomes congealed. Then it is that uplifted hearts, by all they suffer, learn how to obey, how to obey their own nature, a nature which is equipped to live in a pain-filled world.

But we are most often disappointed with ourselves. Robert Louis Stevenson broke out in a letter to Mrs. Stitwell: "I don't know what to do—the world goes helplessly round about me. There is no more possibility of doing, living, being anything but a beast, and there's the end of it." And later he wrote: "I have given up all hope, all fancy rather, of making literature my hold; I see that I have not capacity enough." The contrast between high hope and feeble achievement, between fair promise and meager fulfillment, is a bitter experi-

ence, and yet Stevenson learned by all he suffered how to obey, how to reap from enforced idleness and pain a rich harvest for generations yet to come.

Again we are educated by the pain of *bereavement*. We see the young go out to meet the unseen in the beauty and innocence of childhood, the older in the high tide of their powers, and sheer sorrow pierces our hearts and we ask with Thompson:

> Whether a man's heart or life it be which yields
> Thee harvest, must thy harvest-fields
> Be dunged with death?

Southwell, a Catholic of the sixteenth century, who finished his career at Tyburn prison, cried out in a similar vein in revolt against death in the midst of life:

> Did Christ manure thy heart to breed him briers
> Or doth it need this unaccustomed soyle
> With hellish dung to fertile heaven's desires?

The rebellion against the mystery of death has been profound from the beginning, for bereavement is a painful matter. Paul lived in a day when almost every one of a subject race in the Empire bore on his body the scars of Roman oppression, and the writer to the Hebrews felt within his heart the dull ache caused by the loss of many by fire and sword and by wild beasts in the Roman arenas. But even from such desolation he had learned by what he suffered to trust in the ability of God to

conserve unto Himself the lives wasted and flung away in the savage hurly-burly of life.

But it is difficult to see the spiritual uses of dark places in life.

> Who shall so forecast the years
> And find in loss a gain to match?
> Or reach a hand through time to catch
> The far-off interest of tears?

Jesus, confronted in the Garden with the dark mystery of his brutal crucifixion and the farcical trial, learned by what He suffered how to obey and cried out in the agony of His soul: "The cup which my father giveth me, shall I not drink it?"

Men are willing to bear disappointment and bereavement, provided it is for some use. The pacifist objects to war, not because he is opposed to heroism and gallantry on the field, but because he fears that nobility and devotion will be wasted. The pacifist sees all this pain thrown away; and indeed it will be wasted unless men of great vision and daring arise to make it available for the redeeming of society.

Men are schooled through the suffering of bereavement not to fear God, but to obey that spiritual order which prevails in a morally governed universe.

Once more, we are prepared for larger life through the *inevitable hardships of life*. There may be some who are born good and wise and sympa-

thetic, but most of us learn to be thoughtful with exceeding great travail of soul and body. Nevertheless that perfect gift is not denied to the willing and seeking heart.

Thomas Edward Brown, who had meditated profoundly on the problem of pain, set down as his conclusion:

For thus it is God stings us into life,
    Provoking actual souls
    From bodily systems, giving us the poles
That are His own, not merely balanced strife.

Nay, the great passions are His veriest thought,
    Which whoso can absorb,
    Nor, querulous halting, violate their orb,
In him the mind of God is fullest wrought.

Thrice happy such an one! Far other he
    Who dallies on the edge
    Of the great vortex, clinging to a sedge
Of patent good, a timorous Manichee;

And he is one, who takes the deathless forms,
    Who schools himself to think
    With the All-thinking, holding fast the link,
God-riveted, that bridges casual storms.

But tenfold one is he, who feels all pains
    Not partial, knowing them
    As ripples parted from the gold-beaked stem,
Wherewith God's galley onward ever strains.

To him the sorrows are the tension-thrills
    Of that serene endeavor,
    Which yields to God forever and forever
The joy that is more ancient than the hills.

The great souls of the Church have all been schooled in hardship. Paul assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit prevented him and turned him northwest from Ephesus to the straits; he wanted to go into Asia, but God sent him to Europe. He came to know that the life of faith meant trust in God and that prayer was an effort to coöperate with God and get His will done, instead of an effort to get God to do our will. Paul was a disciplined personality who had learned by pain which were the greater and which the lesser values in life.

Preparation marked by pain and restraint is never an easy process. Men take military discipline with no little chafing, surrounded with the favoring glamour of army life and martial glory. When it comes to the quiet discipline of the spirit, we are even more impatient.

The scholar poring over his page or the scientist watching his test tube has a thousand temptations to throw over the whole experiment, counting the result not worth the cost. But from a hundred mental crises and times of bitter discouragement and confusion there comes forth the final achievement, the hard-won victory. A mother begins patiently to train her child until the day-by-day drudgery wears down her spirit and she descends to the plane of common scolding. But if she holds fast to her patience, it pervades the whole home and wins all within it to the same mood. A man striving to

make ends meet financially, able to save only by severe economy, is tempted many times to throw up his job and seek less honourable but more lucrative employment. It is not easy to be industrious, or loving, or persevering.

The disciplines of life are painful. But in all these cases we learn by what we suffer how to obey and to achieve that dignity and serenity of life known only to those who do God's will.

The school of pain is a grievous school, a school to which all must go, but it is a school which educates, a school which gradually teaches us by rebuffs and failures and waiting, and sometimes by withholding the true values and the true sequences in the spiritual life. We learn by what we suffer how to obey; we learn by what we cause others to suffer the heartache and the pain which finally redeem our self-forgiving spirits.

The cry of earth's anguish went up unto God,—
"Lord, take away pain,—
The shadow that darkens the world Thou hast made,
The close-coiling chain
That strangles the heart, the burden that weighs
On the wings that would soar,—
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou has made
That it love Thee the more."

Then answered the Lord to the world He had made,
"Shall I take away pain?
And with it the power of the soul to endure
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart

And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes who lift from the flame
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price
And smiles through the loss,—
Can ye spare from the lives that would climb unto mine
The Christ on His Cross?"

We do not care how much we are called upon to suffer, so long as it is for something infinitely precious. There is wasted suffering in every life, but pain can be used for the salvation of men's souls.

Disappointment, bereavement and the inevitable disciplines of life are our school masters and by them we discover the true nature of the world, of our own souls and of God. Even the Son of Man was tutored by pain. Son though Jesus was, "he learned by all he suffered how to obey."

Some Old Testament Explanations

"Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking and behold there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house . . . and they are dead."—*Job* 1 : 18.

Every sensible person realizes that suffering is universal. One may escape it for a season, but sooner or later the blow will fall. As one looks upon Nature he finds it "red in tooth and claw"; a thousand fall that one may live. Man is born in travail, and all his days he walks in peril of pain, from himself, from his neighbors, or from the physical universe. The innocent suffer for the guilty, children are blasted for sins they never committed, trusting souls are betrayed and faithful men and women are humiliated. Try as we may, we cannot hide the fact of suffering. What shall we say in the face of grief and pain and sorrow?

In the Book of Job, where the problem of evil is dramatically set forth, four explanations emerge.

The first one is that suffering is *punishment for sin.*

Undoubtedly much pain is the direct result of wrongdoing, but this does not account for all suffering. One day Jesus passed a man blind from his birth, and His disciples said to Him: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was

born blind?" And Jesus made answer: "Neither hath this man sinned or his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Many bear misery and grief from causes other than divine retribution.

The theme of sin and retribution is as old as man. The fall of Adam and Eve is a parable of every man; the story of Cain and Abel is reënacted whenever man kills his brother, either by the footpad's stab in the back or by housing him in the rotten air of overcrowded tenements; the lies of Abraham to his powerful enemies and the stealing of Esau's blessing are part of the human story. Sin and retribution run through all literature from Sophocles and Euripides, from Shakespeare, Milton and Dante, to George Eliot and the most illustrious of the moderns, whether the theme be a profound meditation upon the dark problems of life like the *Divine Comedy* or a melodrama like *Ten Nights in a Bar Room.*

There is a large area of human misery which is the direct result of the sufferer's wrongdoing, but this explanation will not account for the fact that the innocent suffer and the wicked often flourish like a green bay tree. The quick conclusions of Job's friends, that the venerable and righteous believer was suffering because of his own guilt, was not true, for had not the Lord Himself said to Satan that Job was a perfect and an upright man?

Another explanation given to Job was that suffering *comes to correct and educate.*

We see this process every day in our own and in other lives. Transgression of the laws of health or of the laws of the state brings pain, and likewise a breach of the laws of God has its appropriate punishment. What a man sows, that shall he reap. If he sows unto the spirit he shall of the spirit reap many good things, but if he follows the desires of the body he shall harvest a crop of sorrow. Men grope their way toward spiritual illumination through pain and hardship and the refining fires of adversity.

Friedrich Nietzsche, although he threw aside pity as soft and weak, hailed physical and mental pain as that which shapes and gives character to a personality. He agreed with Musset, "*L'homme est un apprenti, la doleur est son maître.*" Nietzsche recorded of his own pain: "The discipline of suffering, of great suffering, know ye not that it is only this discipline that has produced all the greatness of humanity hitherto?" Nietzsche even went so far as to claim that capacity for suffering denoted a man's social rank.

Undoubtedly the painful consequence of sin is the chief tutor of a very large section of the human race. Consequence, nemesis, retribution, biological, mental or spiritual punishment seem to be goads which are needed in human society. Even to high-

minded men the shock of untoward circumstances heightens their spiritual life. A woman wrote of General Andrew Jackson when his wife died: "General Jackson was never quite the same man afterward; her death subdued his spirit and corrected his speech." There is a disciplining power about some pain.

Pain has educated us in our adjustment to the physical universe. Through pain one learns the uses of fire. Through coming to grief man first learns about the forces of gravitation, which can be made to turn wheels and run elevators and do a thousand useful tasks. Suffering has often proved a mental stimulus, and from the hard schooling of accident and flood and pestilence the thinker evolves safety devices—sprinkling systems and antitoxins.

Pain has also stimulated men spiritually. Those who have carried grievous crosses have been the creative helpers of mankind, out of struggle and effort come strength, from doubt and battle with the specters of the mind comes the faith that overcometh even in loneliness and apparent disaster. Out of failure and incompetence and humiliation comes the spirit of meekness which shall inherit the earth. The faith and the thoughts of a person who has lived a quiet, care-free life, who has had no deaths to bear, no sick to watch beside, no heart-breaks, are indeed beautiful; but much more interesting is the faith of a mature mind which has been battered by

the shocks of life. Such a one is a stranger neither to joy nor to sorrow; he knows how to be exalted and how to be abased, how to be poor and how to abound. In the silence of the sleepless night, in thought never expressed to any earthly friend, when one faces the issues of life and death, in the crucible of experience, when success is postponed or when health is denied, the soul stretches upward. Cast iron, which is full of carbon and other impurities, is brittle and cannot withstand stress and strain; but wrought iron, which has been refined by great heat, can stand torsion and bending and strain.

Epictetus, the slave, was lame, yet in his ethics he taught many to walk the straight and honorable way of life. Out of the grief and agony of Dante's soul came the *Divine Comedy*. Milton was blind, yet he wrote: "My vision Thou hast dimmed that I may see Thyself, Thyself alone." Bunyan's twelve years in Bedford jail produced *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Augustine's sufferings made possible his *Confessions*. *In Memoriam* was written because of the death of Arthur Hallam: Tennyson turned his grief to spiritual advantage and blessed mankind with what God gave to him in his days of loneliness and grief. He made the most of the situation and was content to

> ". . . trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void."

George Matheson, having been rejected by the one he loved because of his approaching blindness and knowing that he must spend his years in darkness, enriched Christendom with his hymn:

"O cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust, life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

There is a pain that corrects and amplifies the intellectual and spiritual life of man.

Still another explanation of suffering given in the drama of Job was that *without it virtue would be impossible.*

It is a peculiar thing that even in our games we make obstacles and hard places. Man seems to grow and become strong physically, mentally, and spiritually when he overcomes. As a sea gull rises against the wind, so the spirit of man rises with adversity. The brave become chivalrous because of danger and risk and hardship, the patient develop fortitude because there is much to bear. It is true in every phase of life—the game fish swim upstream. The pithy palm tree grows in the moist, warm jungle, protected from the tempest and the frost; but the hard woods grow in the north, and from the onslaughts of many blasts they develop resilience

and power. The finest violins are made from wood from the north side of trees which have been subjected to the twisting and bending of the winds. Just as in fear we have the only occasion for courage so virtue is developed only in the presence of strain and temptation.

Christopher Pearse Cranch, in his *Ormuzd and Ahriman*, has Satan say:

> There were no shadows till the worlds were made;
> No evil and no sin till finite souls,
> Imperfect thence, conditioned in free-will,
> Took form, projected by eternal law
> Through co-existent realms of time and space.
> Naught evil, though it were the Prince of evil,
> Hath being in itself. For God alone
> Existeth in Himself, and Good which lives
> As sunshine lives, born of the Parent Sun,
> I am the finite shadow of that Sun,
> Opposite, not opposing, only seen
> Upon the nether side.

Danger and temptation are the atmosphere in which souls are developed.

Yet another explanation given to Job was that there is *no answer to the problem of suffering, except in the mystery and majesty of God.*

The explanation of human woe must come in some larger universe. All we can do on earth is to trust. Here we see darkly, there we shall behold face to face. The Lord spoke with Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up thy loins like a man,

for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place? . . . Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? . . . Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?" The lesson for Job was one of patience. He could not understand the purpose, but for him the will of God was the all-sufficient answer, and he bowed his head in obedience.

Beyond the portals of death, in that larger, ampler universe, men could go through the purgatorial process and enlarge on fields of activity denied them in this present life, so largely conditioned by accident, the physical world, and the wills of others.

But such a solution is easier for Job than for Job's wife. Edmund Vance Cooke has Job's wife cry out in his *The Book of Extenuations*:

> Not only am I Wife of Job, but I am I,
> Who bade him curse his God and dare to die.
> Yea, he reviled me, scorning my advice
> And then, man-like, he cursed, and twice and thrice
> And many a more than I thought might suffice.
>
> We were stripped naked to the wind and rain,
> Yet no one heard me murmur or complain,

But when my seven supple sons were slain,
And my three daughters sacrificed beside,
That God might gratify a petty pride
And make a boast to Satan, *then* I cried,
"Curse Him and let us die, as ours have died."
I neither love nor fear this God. He has no spell
To plunge me into a deeper, deadlier hell
Than this. Nor can there be a bleaker cell
Within his prison-house.

I was a wife
And brought ten heart-warmed lovelings into life.
I nursed and tended and I raised them all,
To be a sacrifice to this God's whim,
To be a testament of this God's fall,
For fall He did, when Satan tempted Him.
Curse God and die! and still from out the toils
Wherein I labor at my grief and pain,
I curse the God who thinks my children spoils
For dicing with the devil. Or, again,
Who counts their deaths a discipline—like boils!

And then came Bildad, Zopher, Eliphaz,
Such lingering friends as every mourner has,
And squatted on us like a seven-day blight
Of Shuh- and Temon- and of Naomath-ite.
To comfort *Job*, forsooth! O blabbering men!
Which of *you* has conceived and brought forth ten?

My sons and daughters being slain, why then
God doomed me to conceive another ten,
To labor and bring forth, as though His Eye
Counted ten babes the litter of a sty.
Aye, even He boasts his later love surpasses,
Delivering daughters as he tallies asses
And granting sons with newer flocks of sheep.

Now, by my Motherhood he holds so cheap
And by my ten dearlings where they lie,
Job may regain his patience, but not I.

Out of their dust-stopped mouths I hear them cry,
"He slew us for no wherefore and no why,
A sacrifice to Satan! Curse Him still, and die!"

Some like Job's wife behold the mystery of pain and resent it.

Again pain can be redemptive. The voluntary pain borne by the Suffering Servant of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and by all who like him enter into the heartache of other lives is suffering which shames and educates and redeems. Potent as are some kinds of suffering to correct the spirits of men, there is still a higher office of suffering and that is to reveal to them the meaning of love, which can free their spirits from the bondage of sin and habit and indifference.

In the Old Testament we have a story of redemption through suffering. The wife of Hosea had been unfaithful to him. He named her child "Lo-ammi," "not my people." At length she left his home and sank in the social scale until she was bought and sold as a slave. Hosea never ceased to love his wife. He purchased her from her owner, took her back to his fireside, and placed her again in a position of honor and respect. When Hosea took her home again through the streets, he must have suffered. Surely he was bruised for her iniquities and he was wounded for her transgressions; but he had the love that never fails, that endures until the end, and by his stripes she was redeemed. In some

lesser human sense he became sin for her as Christ became sin for us upon the bitter Cross.

The fact of vicarious suffering, or suffering for the sake of others, is all about us. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Sometimes we see it in a man who lays down his life in a single heroic act of sacrifice, or again in the life of some mother who redeems her careless children by years of patient love that hopes all things and will not be defeated. By bent backs and furrowed faces and unquenchable faith are people saved. The physician's loss of sleep and his hazard in all manner of disease, the teacher's agony over the heedlessness of pupils, the explorer's intrepidity in his attempt to enlarge cosmic knowledge, the research worker in some lonely laboratory giving his life to discover a preventive for typhus or cancer, are all types of the Suffering Servant who gives his life for the common good.

Jesus suffered to redeem. His death was a historical event, true enough, but it was also a revelation of a principle that has been in effect since the foundation of the world. He showed us what God was like, and through Him we see how God loves and suffers for the wrongdoing of His children. Whenever Christlike, redemptive love enters life, it saves. Men often cannot understand our teaching about the way of salvation, but wherever any one

cares, wherever any one will lay his or her life alongside another in patient, persistent love, whatever it may entail in the way of social reproach, loss of treasure, or mental suffering, we begin to understand the meaning of the love which was in Jesus.

As one walks down the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, and climbs the slope and goes out through the Beautiful Gate, across the Vale of Hinnom and up the side of the Mount of Olives, one comes upon a British cemetery where sleep the boys who perished in Allenby's Palestinian campaign. They came from long distances to keep their *rendezvous* with death on the barren hills of Judæa. Upon the rows of white crosses are names of Sikhs from North India, of Australians from Melbourne and Sidney; here is a lad from Braemar or Aberdeen, there one from London, and yonder one from Winnipeg or Quebec. They heard the call and came from the far corners of the earth to answer it. The scene brings back the story of the Crucifixion. On the way to the cross the procession met one Simon of Cyrene and on him they laid the cross: he had to share Christ's burden. These boys who sleep on Olivet are in the succession of Simon: on them was laid part of the cross of humanity. By their blood they paid part of the price for the remission of sins. Undoubtedly there were many who, like Simon the Cyrenian, could not understand why the cross had been laid upon them. It had come to some by social

pressure, to others by conscription; but like Simon, they bore it.

The statement of Paul to the Colossians—"We fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ"—is a true word. Christ left His work to be carried on by men and there is much remaining to be accomplished. Whenever men willingly enter into suffering in order to liberate others from disease or ignorance or selfishness, they, like Jesus, bear in their bodies the sin of a brutalized and indifferent generation, but a generation which is finally to be won by the appeal of dedicated love made unmistakably evident through its willingness to suffer.

How can we explain away pain? We cannot: it is too continuous an experience to dismiss lightly, and yet the explanations of others aid us. Some pain is as Job's friend indicated, a punishment for sin, some comes to correct and educate. Pain offers the occasion of the virtues of fortitude and patience without which human life would be flabby and weak. For some suffering there is no answer save in the mystery and majesty of God. Some anguish like the agony of the cross arrests and shames those who are aware of it and in the end overcomes the grossness and indifference of the world.

The Perplexity of Dual Nature

"The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I do."—*Romans* 7 : 19.

"If St. Paul had come to me I could have helped him," said a distinguished psychoanalyst recently. By that he meant that he would have enabled St. Paul to classify and dispose of the discord in his soul. Whether he could have helped this mighty missionary of the cross we cannot tell, but we are aware of the inner tension under which Paul labored. William James remarked: "The general basis of all religious experience is the fact that man has a dual nature, and is connected with two spheres of thought, a shallower and a profounder sphere, in either of which he may learn to live more habitually." Paul in the midst of his inner conflict cried out, "The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do."

The framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith called this spirit of division and frustration, this perverseness of the human heart, original sin. Modern psychology calls it the instinctive mind. It makes no difference which term is employed, the reality described is the same. Every one knows the difference between working smoothly and working

with inward friction, between calm and inward riot, between peace of mind and a troubled heart.

Due to untoward circumstances we feel a flood of hot anger rise within our hearts, our tongues are loosed, and we bare our fangs to the world. It is so easy and so futile, in the face of confusion and irritation and misunderstanding, to recoil like an animal at bay and say, "Stand off!" But wolfish attitudes do not solve human problems. What are the situations that confront us?

There are *personal antipathies* which come upon us like obsessions.

There may be saintly souls who do not find some one person especially difficult, but they are rare. Paul found that Barnabas got on his nerves—but it is no compliment to the pair that with a common allegiance to Christ they could not agree about their doings on that missionary journey. Their primitive fighting natures got the upper hand and they had an unseemly row: "The contention was . . . sharp between them."

In the matter of personal antipathies we face one of our cruelest humiliations. We determine that we shall not give way to our likes and dislikes founded upon little matters of speech or dress or manner. After some outburst we swear that we will conquer the spirit of criticism and of complaint, only to find next day that we have to struggle with this same demon. We find that nine-tenths of our differences

will not bear the scrutiny of calm and kindly consideration. Like mists before the noonday sun they evaporate under the steady warmth of a genuinely loving nature.

Most of our personal antipathies are based upon slight or wholly imaginary affronts; their origins escape us and are lost in the shadowy land of instinctive dreads. We dislike some because we feel that their success lessens our chances, we envy others because they are stronger or better-looking or expert in games or in work. Still others we despise because they are poor and demand that we share our crust with them; and we hate the rich because of their abundance. Nearly all of these antipathies run back to the instinctive levels of man's nature, primitive desires and fears having to do with food, clothing, shelter and mating.

Evelyn Underhill, discussing the dual nature of man, remarked: "More and more psychology tends to emphasize the Pauline distinction: demonstrating that the profound disharmony existing in most civilized men between the impulsive and the rational life, the many conflicts which sap his energy, arise from the persistence within us of the archaic and primitive alongside the modern mind. It demonstrates that the many stages and constituents of our psychic past are still active in each one of us; though often below the threshold of consciousness. The blindly instinctive life, with its almost exclusive

interests in food, safety, and reproduction; the law of the flesh in its simplest form, carried over from our pre-human ancestry and still capable of taking charge when we are off our guard. . . . The history of primitive man covers millions of years, the history of civilized man a few thousand at the most. Therefore it is not surprising that the primitive outlook should have bitten deep into the plastic stuff of the developing psyche, and forms still the infantile foundation of our mental life. It was this battle of the animal with the spiritual which made Paul cry out: 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' "

In the case of our antipathy toward our neighbors whom it is so difficult to love, against our employers, against our sisters and brothers and husbands and wives, every sensible person always asks himself: How can I meet this problem, how can I achieve harmony out of this squabble? And the important query always is, what is the right response to my particular situation?

Where does the nettle of vexation thrust deepest into your life, where is irritation or frustration or suffering focused, and what is the appropriate response to it? Can envy be stayed with more envy? Can misrepresentation or even out-and-out lying heal a broken friendship? Can wounded feelings be made whole again by stiff-neckedness or haughtiness or pride or egotism? If you are serious in your

desire to start over in some friendship, what is the right action on your part to deal with your dual nature, to stop the contradiction of honest intention and flabby execution? Appropriate action to heal personal antipathies lies along two lines—restitution and humility.

Restitution of that which has been taken is the first step in healing any broken spiritual tie. At one time in his career Francis of Assisi became so interested in building the local church that he sold his own house and also several bales of his father's cloth in order to buy stone. Then came the blackest moment of his life: the world turned against him and called him a thief. Francis stood forth before his accusers and said: "Up to this time I have called Pietro Barnadone father, but now I am the servant of God. Not only the money but everything that can be called his I will restore to my father, even the very clothes he has given me." Afterward he went forth in power to found the Franciscan Order. Restitution is the secret of power and the solution to most personal difficulties. Zacchæus said: "If I have taken aught of any man by false accusation I restore fourfold." Then it was that Jesus said, "To-day has salvation come to this house."

What is it that has been taken? Has it been money, or goods, or a fair name? Has it been peace of mind, or love, or friendship? The only solution of such human perplexities is to restore as far as

it is humanly possible. Go where the poisonous words have been spoken and eradicate the venom by telling the truth. If it is joy that has been taken away by tyranny and impatience or by perversity of disposition, then restitution of the radiance of life is the appropriate response. In the conclusive settlement of any difficulty, restoring what has been taken is the secret of removing the discord.

And with the restoration goes humility. No amount of mechanical adjustment can take the place of that gentleness of spirit which alone can reëstablish the spirit of understanding and accord. A judge can enforce a verdict from a court of law, but only the verdict of a free heart can restore again the love which has been broken.

Again, we face *discord within ourselves.*

" 'I desire,' says à Kempis, 'to enjoy thee inwardly but I cannot take thee. I desire to cleave to heavenly things but fleshly things and unmortified passions depress me. I will in my mind be above all things but in despite of myself I am constrained to be beneath, so I, unhappy man, fight with myself and am made grievous to myself while the spirit seeketh what is beneath. O what I suffer within while I think on heavenly things in my mind; the company of fleshly things cometh against me when I pray.' "

" 'O Master,' says the Scholar in Boehme's great dialogue, 'the creatures that live in me so withhold

me, that I cannot wholly yield and give myself up as I willingly would.' "

No psychologist has come nearer to a statement of the human situation than have these mature specialists in the spiritual life.

Mark Twain, himself tortured by inner struggles, wrote of his difficulties in overcoming profanity: "All through the first ten years of my married life I kept a constant and discreet watch upon my tongue while in the house, and went outside and to a distance when circumstances were too much for me and I was obliged to seek relief. I prized my wife's respect and approval above all the rest of the human race's respect and approval. I dreaded the day when she should discover that I was but a whited sepulcher partly freighted with suppressed language."

"The creatures that live within us," to use Boehme's phrase, are very much alive. Clarence Day wrote a clever satire on modern life entitled *This Simian World*, in which he drew many entertaining analogies between our present mode of life and the way we would carry on if we were tigers and lions. But the hopeful part about the life of man is that he has addressed himself to this problem of his dual nature, this warfare between his higher and his lower self. For at his highest and best he knows that he must move upward.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy* appropriate punish-

ments are meted out to different groups who are destined to live in the underworld, the lustful are swept about on a never-resting storm; hypocrites wear leaden cloaks that look like gold; flatterers wallow in filth. But in the person and condition of Lucifer the poet delineates his supreme vision of sin. There at the bottom of the black pit, at the place farthest away from God, he lies bound in his prison-house. He is huge, bloody, loathsome, grotesque, self-absorbed; not dead, nor can he be called alive. He has three faces, one fiery red, one halfway between white and yellow, one black, showing the threefold nature of sin as malignant, impotent, and ignorant. He sends forth chilling death, causing sorrow to others through his own anguish, punishing his followers with rightful torture, and involving himself in unending torment. The tears of the world are flowing back to him as their source, and becoming his misery. This is a true characterization of a nature which has yielded to the lower instincts or has refused to harness them for the service of love.

There is a baffling innate perversity which causes us to desire the fruit of the forbidden tree. "Oh, would that virtue had been forbidden," cried out the author of the *Yorkshire Tragedy*. Beatrice Webb, the distinguished English writer on labor and social problems, said of her own struggle: "Somewhere down in the depths the Ego that affirms and

the Ego that denies were continually wrangling over the duty and destiny of man, but it was only now and again that their voices were heard above the din of every day life." We grow accustomed to submerging our better self, which struggles for freedom in the mistaken idea that by so doing we shall have peace of mind. But underneath the battle rages. We suffer because, given the choice between a higher and lower way of life, we choose the lower.

And that leads us to the central emphasis of the Christian religion, *what man can be when redeemed.*

It is not what man is in the rough; it is not what he is with his jungle customs and animal instincts, that is Christianity's enduring interest. It is what he may become through a devotion to Christ which cleanses and enhances and sanctifies even his crudest animal urges.

In Roslyn Cathedral near Edinburgh is a carving of the devil and an angel wrestling for the body of a man, a parable of the struggle between the earthly and the heavenly within us.

In this struggle we all desperately need the help of Christ. Whatever else He is, Jesus is the supreme revelation of God. He came to reveal to struggling, incomplete humanity the resources which God has available for us in our efforts toward beauty of soul and nobility of mind.

The way out lies in approaching Jesus with appreciation and obedience, taking what He has of

purity, humility, courage and love and responding to every meaning He has for us. In the midst of the years, through Him and His quality of life, His disposition, God had provided One Who can "deliver us from the body of this death."

Weariness

"O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest."—*Psalm* 55:6.

Recent experiments at Columbia University indicate that although the body becomes tired and a task grows irksome, the mental part of a person, his brain, does not become fatigued to any very great degree. Nevertheless one of the most humiliating experiences is the spiritual weariness, due, if not to physical overstrain, at least to tedium, monotony, or distaste for long-continued work. Fatigue destroys our marginal time, which we could give to the culture of our esthetic and spiritual natures. Ask the average person why he does not read more, sing more, play more, pray more, and you will generally receive the reply, "I am tired." The one who wrote, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest," was a tired man.

We become weary through the *fatigue of daily work.*

Fatigue has clothed us in leaden mantles, overwork has shod us with weighted sandals, we have become utterly undone, we have no resource to meet life's attacks, and we cry out for relief.

A very simple solution to the mental and spiritual

consequences of fatigue would be to stop work on this side of exhaustion, so that we may have strength to play and to study and to pray. We all need better judgment as to when to quit work and when to rest and integrate life.

The most obvious form of weariness is the physical exhaustion which rests upon us after exertion, largely due to poisons and wastes in muscle-tissue which must be carried away by the blood stream. Only those who have experienced hard, grinding labor can appreciate the desolating effects of excessive fatigue. It cuts into morals, arrests growth and ruins life.

Brewers and distillers have long known what physicians have proven, that fatigue lowers a man's powers of resistance to drink. The rows of saloons opposite the factory gates of our great mills were eloquent testimony to the desire of men to seek relief through drink from the tedium and weariness of life. When men are dazed by fatigue they are reckless and off-guard; their capacity for foresight, their ability to estimate consequences are all at low ebb.

Excessive work may become as great a vice as laziness. A great American naturalist, John Muir, describes the fearful labor on his father's farm: "We had to work very hard on the farm in summer, mowing, hoeing, cradling wheat, hauling it to the barns, etc. No rest in the shade of the trees

on the side of the fields. When tired we dared not even go to the spring for water in the terrible thirst of the muggy dog-days, because the field was in sight of the house and we might be seen. . . . We had to make ourselves sick that we might lay up something against a sick day, as if we could kill time without injuring eternity. The excessive strain and anxiety of some is well nigh an incurable disease. . . . A stitch in time saves nine, so we take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. . . . Once in harvest time I had the mumps and was unable to swallow any food except milk, but this was not allowed to make any difference, while I staggered with weakness and sometimes fell headlong among the sheaves. . . . It often seemed to me that our fierce, over-industrious way of getting the grain from the ground was too closely connected with grave-digging." And it is not only farmer boys who feel the devastating effects of overwork.

Labor is a blessed means of working with God in creating and discovering and perfecting the means of life, but industriousness out of all proportion to the totality of life can sear and kill. Somewhere we must find relief—not the relief which narcotizes and anesthetizes, but the relief through esthetic and intellectual and religious activities which lets loose the dammed-up tides of emotion. No one can be content with a relief that grows bitter and repellent as soon as received. John Muir was one

day wading through the difficult bogs of southern Canada and was exceedingly weary. The swamp in which many had lost their lives was almost impenetrable. As he floundered on he made the discovery of a rare plant, *Calypso Borealis*, the "Hider of the North." "No other bloom was near it," he said, "for the bog a short distance below the surface was ice cold. It seemed the most spiritual of all the flower people I had ever met. I sat down beside it and fairly cried for joy. It seems wonderful that so frail and lovely a plant has such power over human hearts. This *Calypso* meeting happened some forty-five years ago, and it was more memorable and impressive than any of my meetings with *human* beings, excepting perhaps Emerson and one or two others. . . . How long I sat beside *Calypso* I don't know. Hunger and weariness vanished, and only after the sun was low in the west I splashed on through the swamp, strong and exhilarated as if nevermore to feel any mortal care."

We all need something—it may be an old song on a phonograph or barrel organ, a colored print, a visit to the Metropolitan Museum—it may be listening to music or in feeling the trust and love of another presence—but we need it to unwind us, to smooth us out, to reëstablish our prostrate and divided personalities.

There is relief from hard physical fatigue through adoration, appreciation, and worship.

Again, we grow weary not only with fatigue but with *the tardy rewards of life.* Many slave and save and serve for a lifetime to discover no reward in money, or position or friendship.

Joseph Conrad served for many years as seaman and ship's officer, and labored other years of almost unrequited toil at his craft of writing stories of the sea. He was not then the popular author who wrote *Typhoon* and *Rescue* and *Lord Jim*, but a driven, defeated writer with an empty purse and a weary heart. In this period he remarked in a letter to a friend: "Excuse this discordant strain, but the fact is that I've just received the accounts of all my publishers, from which I perceive that all my immortal works, thirteen in all, have brought me last year something under five pounds in royalties. That sort of thing quenches that *joie de vivre* which should burn like a flame in an author's breast and in the manner of an explosive engine drive his pen onward at thirty pages an hour." Work is good, but along the way one must see rewards, even if they are rewards for a future generation, or a completed work which in its beauty and value is an end in itself.

Work will not solve many of life's greatest difficulties, those which require judgment and insight. It is in those moments when we can draw aside somewhat and view what we are doing with perspective that we regain sight of final ends. And this does not

mean solitude for itself, as a retreat from life. David wanted wings like a dove to do just this thing, and he found them, not in actual means of transportation but in the transport of spirit which came to him in sitting down, pen in hand, and letting the spirit flow through him. By the time he had written the end of that psalm his entire nature was changed; he saw again what heartbreaking work and the tardy rewards of life had driven from sight for a time, and wrote in sonorous vein: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." In the midst of physical fatigue, by withdrawing and by prayer he had built up his threadbare personality and was restored once more—his value judgments were regained. He could see ultimate, if tardy, rewards in life.

We often grow weary because *we have no object upon which to center our supreme allegiance.* Life has lost a center, a rallying point unless it focuses in one great devotion. Right here is where we need some one to believe in us and some one in whom we can believe. Of all the persons who ever dared place faith in the frail bodies and hearts of men, Jesus was the most daring. He risked every feeling, every tender emotion, every hope. Some were broken by the slaps on the face and the crown of thorns, others were outraged by the purple robe put upon Him in jest. His love was borne through the

humiliation of the Crucifixion, but he continued to believe. There would be fewer failures if each person knew there was some one who would be quite heartbroken if he went wrong or failed.

In the days of his severest struggles, Galsworthy received a letter from a friend who believed in him, which helped to restore his confidence in himself and in the dependability of the world. His friend remarked: "That the man who has written once *The Four Winds* has written now *The Man of Devon* is a source of infinite gratification to me. It vindicates my insight, my opinion, my judgment, and it satisfies my affection for you—in whom I believed and am believing. Because that is the point: I am believing. You've gone now beyond the point where I could be of use to you otherwise than just by my belief." How much such a letter means in helping one to lay hold again on old loyalties and neglected devotions! Such affection restores one's inner life.

But supremely it is the divine compassion which regenerates any responsive heart. Sir Henry M. Stanley wrote of his experience in the heart of Africa: "Years of indifference and excitement have an unconscious hardening power. . . . But my selfish hustling stopped in time. . . . My sicknesses were frequent and during my first attacks of African fever I took up the Bible to while away tedious, feverish hours in bed. Though incapacitated from

the march, my temperature being constantly at 105° Fahr., it did not prevent me from reading when not light-headed. When I laid down the book the mind commenced to feed upon what the memory suggested. Then rose the ghosts of bygone yearnings haunting every cranny of the brain with numbers of baffled hopes and unfulfilled aspirations. Here was I, only a poor journalist, with no friends, and yet possessed by a feeling of power to achieve! How could it ever be? Then verses of Scripture rang iteratingly through my mind as applicable to my own being, sometimes full of promise, often full of warning. . . . I flung myself on my knees and poured out my soul utterly in secret prayer to Him from whom I had been so long estranged, to Him who had led me here mysteriously into Africa, there to reveal Himself and His will."

Stanley was restored by the repetition of timeless truths, the brightening of boyhood affection, the renewal of his dedication to God. He, too, would have flown away with wings like a dove to find peace elsewhere, but peace and rest and assurance came to him in his fever upon his sick bed when he centered his life again on loyalty to Christ.

William Vaughn Moody, like Stanley, catches the genius of turning weariness and suffering to spiritual ends in his lines on suffering.

Of wounds and sore defeat
I made my battle stay;
Winged sandals for my feet
I wove of my delay;
Of weariness and fear
I made my shouting spear,
Of loss and doubt and dread
And swift oncoming doom
I made a helmet for my head
And a flowing plume.
From the shutting mist of death,
From the failure of the breath,
I made a battle horn to blow
Across the vales of overthrow.
O hearken, love, the battle horn!
The triumph clear, the silver scorn.
O hearken where the Echoes bring
Down the gray disastrous morn
Laughter and rallying—

For those who are weary, who are physically tired, who are perplexed by the tardy rewards of life, to those in need of a spiritual center for life, there is One who will answer the soul's desire for beauty and harmony. There is a Friend whose love can hold fast and sustain those who cast their burdens upon Him. In Him is peace and love and light for every one.

Renunciation

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus . . . It is more blessed to give than to receive.—*Acts* 20:35.

Paul's advice to the Ephesian elders is not a comfortable word. Renunciation of long cherished hopes is one of the hard experiences for the believer. To work tediously for treasure, to hand it out for doubtful gratitude; to labor for some position, scorning delights and living laborious days, and then to renounce it in favor of another,—these are not easy affairs. It is not pleasant to forego a cherished ambition, even though the alternative we choose be for high and noble ends. It is extraordinarily difficult for most of us to understand why we should have such hopes, why a spark should disturb our clod, when we very rarely achieve our sweetest desires and in many cases voluntarily give them up. The mother foregoes her freedom for her children, the devoted teacher puts aside hours of leisure that students may have the benefit of his best efforts, many renounce chosen careers because necessity seems to point in another direction, and in the dark hours of the night we question whether the end is worth all this sacrifice. Are we paying too high a price when we goad ourselves to do what we really do not want to do? Is the compensation

equal to that which we forego? Is one not justified in carving out his own success?

Three lines of observation offer illumination upon this problem.

The first is that renunciation is *universally demanded.*

Yet this fact does not make the giving-up process easier. Tennyson cried out:

> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter—rather more;
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening but some heart did break.

If one is to flare back at each instance where renunciation is demanded, he will remain in a constant state of rebellion. The resistive attitude, the pugnacious and combative spirit, can be maintained for certain times and at certain ages fairly easily, but we tire of being in the opposition. We want peace at last, we want to unloose our swords and to rest, even though we are still laden with some of the burdens of the road. We desire to unbend and be in repose, even though some loads are still saddled upon us. James M. Barrie sets it off in his rectorial address to the red gowns of St. Andrews', when speaking of some lines in Henley's *Invictus:*

> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody but unbowed.

"A fine mouthful," said Barrie, "but it might

have been better to say, 'My head is bloody and bowed.' "

Many gallant souls succeed in maintaining through a lifetime an attitude of defiance toward the universe and its Creator; many grow into unreconciled bitterness as the years go by and cry out with Byron:

> My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruit of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker and the grief
> Are mine alone.

They have been unable to release, to let go—to abandon, if you will—certain ambitions, certain dear objects of their affection. They have not learned how to grace defeat, as General Lee did, with decorum and hope. To them, surrender means unmitigated disaster. The genius of salvage has no place in their philosophy; with them it is win once for all, gloriously and triumphantly with trumpets aflare, or an unconditional defeat. The conquest which comes by quiet and by vigil, the victory that overcomes the pride of the heart, the gains which can be made only by men alone in long hours of penetrating thought—these seem shabby things to the pugnacious. But is it a shabby or a sorry victory to be able to say with Romain Rolland: "Companions, enemies, walk over me, crush me, let me feel the cannons which shall win victory pass over my body! I do not think of the iron which cuts

into my flesh, I do not think of the foot that tramples down my head, I think of mine Avenger, the Master, the Leader of the countless army. My blood shall cement the future. . . . God to such an one is not an impassive Creator, a hero from his tower of brass watching the burning of the city to which he himself has set fire. God was fighting. God was suffering. Fighting and suffering with all who fight and for all who suffer. For God was Life, the drop of light fallen into the darkness, spreading out, reaching out, drinking up the night." Such a conception of God is far different from that expressed in Byron's bitter mood.

The giving-up process is in the daily round of work. Unhappy is the man who never learns of the victories which are above the conflict,—the victory which Socrates won when he drank the poison, the triumph of the defeated Spartans over Xerxes. Beethoven scorned the delights of an easy popularity, and on being told that people did not understand or listen to his music, he exclaimed: "Never mind, they will hear it some day!" The way of renunciation is universal. It seems to have been the peculiar portion of the great—not that giving up so much made them great, but that they had insight to perceive the values below the surface, the less obvious but more precious rewards of life.

Jesus silent after the agony on the cross is mute testimony to the universal demand for renunciation,

for through it we gain the life we have for the moment apparently lost.

The second is that in most cases of renunciation we receive something *of higher value.*

It is true that it is not always easy to see this. Sometimes we never see it. For many, the giving-up idea seems weak and futile, surrendering the only good we have for a phantom hope. They scoff with Tagore's Sandyp at the "glory of bankruptcy," as it has been called, but the reply of Nikil is nevertheless true: "Just as desperately as the chick is infatuated about the bankruptcy of its shell. The shell is real enough, yet it is given up in exchange for intangible light and air. A sorry exchange I suppose you will call it."

In life viewed on a quantitative scale there is no place for renunciation—it would be foolish; but viewing life on a qualitative scale gives a different conclusion. Christianity never works on a quantitative basis—it is foolish to say that the righteous always prosper, very often they are hung for their goodness—but Christianity always works on a qualitative basis.

Christianity teaches that externals should not ride in the saddle, that good and evil come largely from within, that we suffer to conquer suffering, that we bear pain for others that they may be won back to the right road by the sheer moral power of outreaching redemptive love, that it is better to give

than to get, that love is the solvent of difficulties and the revealer of mysteries, that things we see and touch are ephemeral, that our treasure is in heavenly values. In such a philosophy of life there is a place for giving up. After we have put our cherished plans on the altar, have turned from a favorite pursuit to some uncongenial task, have given up liberty to become burdened for love's sake, we shall see the fulfillment of the promise that "everything works for good to them that love the Lord."

Joyce Kilmer traces the spiritual sequence of blessing through renunciations in his *Pennies*.

A few long-hoarded pennies in his hand,
Behold him stand;
A kilted Hedonist, perplexed and sad.
The joy that once he had,
The first delight of ownership is fled.
He bows his little head.
Ah, cruel Time, to kill
That splendid thrill!

Then in his tear-dimmed eyes
New lights arise.
He drops his treasured pennies on the ground,
They roll and bound
And scattered, rest.
Now with what zest
He runs to find his errant wealth again!

So unto men
Doth God, depriving that He may bestow.
Fame, health and money go,
But that they may, new found, be newly sweet.
Yea, at His feet
Sit, waiting us, to their concealment bid,
All they, our lovers, whom His Love hath hid.

Lo, comfort blooms on pain, and peace on strife,
And gain on loss,
What is the key to Everlasting Life?
A blood-stained Cross.

Renunciation has its results in the quality of character. When Jesus said, "He that loseth his life shall find it," he was stating a promise of enriched existence as well as a demand for dedication. Renunciation for spiritual reasons does bring enlargement of personality.

One seeking a higher life, a way above the biological struggle for existence, a chance to live in the realm of the mind, of art, of the spirit, knows there are many doors which do not open to action alone, to the strenuous efforts of hurried men. The gifts of appreciation, of thoughtfulness, of spiritual insight, can come only by the way of quietness and peace. Like Hawthorne's boy who watched the Great Stone Face on the mountainside, unconscious that he was growing into that likeness, that he was to be the great man who was to glorify his town, so they who find victory in the realm of the spirit put aside or forget their desires when they lose themselves in their work, or thought, or art, and find that by losing themselves they emerge into a larger understanding. Across the War Memorial at Yale University is written: "Courage disdains fame and wins it." One who had suffered much wrote: "I suppose the highest form of renunciation doesn't know that

it is renouncing. It is so intent on the end in view that it skips over the pain and anguish to the triumph. Is renunciation the real thing if it falls in love with itself?"

He who lives by the spirit finds that in a qualitative sense renunciation for spiritual reasons gains that which is of greater value. "Our light affliction which is but for the moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are unseen, for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are unseen are eternal." A biographer of Beethoven remarks: "The lives of the great heroes were lives of one long martyrdom; a tragic destiny willed their souls to be forged on the anvil of physical and moral grief, of misery and ill health. They were made great through their misfortune. Because these mighty souls complained little of their unhappiness, the best of humanity is with them. Let us gather courage from them; for torrents of quiet strength and inspiring goodness issued from their great hearts. Without even consulting their works or hearing their voices, we read in their eyes the secret of their lives—that it is good to have been in trouble, for thence the character acquires even more greatness, happiness and fruition."

There are spiritual harvests in renunciation, the "far off interest of tears."

Thirdly, *through renunciation we discover the best in the lives of others.*

Whatever we treasure exclusively for ourselves separates us from others. That is the main point in the story of the rich young ruler—there was something he was unwilling to share. He could not bring himself to exchange wealth for character, and it separated him from Jesus. Ananias and Sapphira were willing to share in common all except the price of certain real estate, and it divided them off from the company of Jesus' followers. Jesus touched on this process of inevitable separation in describing the difficulty of a rich man with his treasure in entering the kingdom: such a one is like a laden camel before a gate—it is impossible to enter. He is separated without the fellowship, outside the city. Tagore in a recent volume remarked: "Our possessions are our limitations. He who is beset upon accumulating riches is unable, with his ego continually bulging, to pass through the gates of comprehension of the spiritual world, which is the world of perfect harmony; he is shut up within the narrow walls of his limited acquisitions." Through renunciation we are equipped to understand the hearts of others for only the humble and the tender-hearted can truly appreciate the hidden qualities within the breasts of those who are bowed down with pain in the human struggle. Common suffering is often a common bond.

Harriet Hamilton-King wrote true philosophy regarding the heartache of mortals who are torn by decisions involving renunciation:

> But if, impatient, thou let slip thy cross,
> Thou wilt not find it in this world again,
> Nor in another; here, and here alone
> Is given thee to suffer for God's sake.
> In other worlds we shall more perfectly
> Serve Him and love Him, praise Him, work for Him,
> Grow near and nearer Him with all delight;
> But then we shall not any more be called
> To suffer, which is our appointment here.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> —But in obedience and humility;—
> Waiting on God's hand, not forestalling it.
> Seek not to snatch presumptuously the palm
> By self-election; poison not thy wine
> With bitter herbs if He has made it sweet;
> Nor rob God's treasuries because the key
> Is easy to be turned by mortal hands.
> The gifts of birth, death, genius, suffering,
> Are all for His hand only to bestow.
> Receive thy portion, and be satisfied.
> Who crowns himself a king is not the more
> Royal; nor he who mars himself with stripes
> The more partaker of the Cross of Christ.

Renunciation is the necessity and the glory of men who live in a material world but whose citizenship is in the realm of the spirit. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus . . . It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The Office of Humiliation

"I have sinned . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son."—*Luke* 15: 18, 19.

There are few of us who can go through life unabashed. Most of us are stunned again and again by the shock of humiliation.

The world in which we live is crowded with people. We meet them when we are feeling at our best, and we meet them through all degrees of fatigue. In the midst of our human adjustments we are constantly humiliated by our own lack of responsiveness, our dullness of perception, our failure to appreciate the unknown heroism, the unspoken aspiration of those near us who are bearing terrific burdens and carrying bravely heavy loads of care or of sorrow. Each has his trials, his temptations, his adjustments to make; each has his own home to guard, perchance a family to feed and clothe, bright dreams to realize, and wholesome desires to gratify. In the midst of achieving our ambitions and working out life's adjustments we often fall into sin and humiliation.

In the story of the Prodigal Son we have an account of a great humiliation. The story records an event in the life of an individual, but it is also

a revelation of a process that is duplicated in most of our lives to-day.

This boy, after he had spent all, *began to feel in want*. He had gone to a far country, where good associations and helpful restraints of his father's house were thrown aside; he had gone off "on his own," "to paddle his own canoe." It is true, his father had furnished him with a certain initial equipment, but it did not last him long; it was quickly spent and he found himself without further resources. The help which might have come from friends was lacking; the restraining power of love and affection was no longer present with him, familiar traditions no longer served as a buoy to keep his head above water. Having changed his environment, he had also changed his conduct and had discovered his true nature. All of this man's religion and culture was evidently in his accustomed surroundings, and when they were gone all was gone.

Only one thing could happen to this boy, who was out on his own resources—that was humiliation. It is true that each person must recognize in himself something dignified and infinitely precious, but we must also recognize the alarming shortage in our equipment. Our ideas fail us long before a given task is finished, our patience is exhausted before we have perfected a relationship; our love is found wanting, not being able to suffer long and still be kind, to bear all things, believe all things, endure

all things, and still keep on loving. We match our feeble wits and personality against the world and find ourselves often defeated. The agonizing introspection of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* is a reflection of our own deep sense of shame:

> Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
> By each let this be heard,
> Some do it with a bitter look,
> Some with a flattering word,
> The coward does it with a kiss,
> The brave man with a sword!
>
> Some kill their love when they are young,
> And some when they are old;
> Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
> Some with the hands of Gold:
> The kindest use a knife, because
> The dead so soon grow cold.

And what is the result? We begin to feel in want, as did the boy who had gone into the far country. Any sort of sin humiliates.

Sin is going into the far country. The humiliation we suffer when we look at the rags and tatters of our dispositions is the first stage of spiritual insight—we see our inability to meet life alone. The humbling circumstances of actual living are too much for our own equipment; we must call on reserves. A sense of need, then, is the first step in spiritual insight.

And then *he came to his senses.*

After the lost boy had grown so hungry that the Scripture says he would gladly have eaten the husks

that were fed to the swine, a second experience came to him, a realization of his own condition. There is a world of truth in the old proverb, "Pride goeth before a fall." When a man feels thoroughly robust, fully self-sufficient, and aggressive, it is difficult for love to penetrate him; for the time being he is out of reach of sympathetic understanding, impervious to the call of less strident spirits for fellowship, regardless of souls sensitive to carelessness or harsh words.

We might have been constructed differently, but looking upon ourselves as we are made we know that we daily get in our own way and spoil our best-meant plans and work. A most faithful and devoted worker for good causes once remarked: "I do get so tired of myself," an apt description of most of us. We become almost nauseated with our clumsy, blundering selves, that spoil even our best efforts. What would we not give to live one month, yes, a day, free from humiliating outbursts and unkind remarks?

Only after the failure do we "come to our senses" and realize that we have wronged others and been untrue to our own best selves.

Tissot pictures the prodigal seated on a stone on a barren hillside surrounded by a few lean swine, the torture within his heart finding expression in the wistfulness of his face. In the solitude his sins had found him out; yet, not daring to return, he

remained in the anguish of indecision, with the issues of right and of wrong conduct standing out in their true relationship. He had come to his senses and he was longing for the courage to return.

The significant fact about the boy's spiritual awakening was that he recognized who he was and was tormented by his condition. He was a child of God; when he came to himself he realized it. He was not made to associate with swine and eat the provender of the beast of the field. He was made for the company of men and to have his life fed with great ideas, great energies, great commitments. When he came to himself he was tormented by his present condition.

Then came *confession.*

The boy fell at his father's feet, exclaiming: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I do not deserve to be called your son any more; only make me like one of your hired men."

Confession is one of the most powerful yearnings of the human soul. Every man, as he comes before God, is conscious of his imperfection and his shortcomings. Jesus' phrase in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," is a normal supplication. A child in the quietness of its mother's arms will confess the transgressions of the day; a full-grown man in the stillness of his soul will lament the sins of a wayward heart. In confession we seem to externalize our sin, we cast our burden on the Lord, we seem to rid ourselves of the

weight by telling some one. Many a criminal has at last been melted down, when he has confessed. Confession puts us in our true light, it leads us into right attitudes, freeing the soul of inhibitions and restraints. A sergeant in the army, after going to confessional, remarked with a shining face: "I feel as if I had had a bath." The prodigal son was aware of the same cleansing experience, when he turned in the direction of his father. His father saw him afar off and gave orders to receive him, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him, give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet, and bring the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for my son here was dead and he has come to life, he was lost and is found." God has a way of seeing us afar off whenever we start back to Him from any country of deceit or impure living or unfair and dishonorable conduct.

An honest confession restores the lost relationship not only with God but also with men. A sincere and timely apology can do much to bind up bruised hearts and to mend a broken friendship.

The humiliation and final acceptance of the prodigal son into his father's household is a parable of the divine compassion available for every man and woman. From waywardness and sin, from harshness and thoughtlessness and aggressiveness, comes humiliation; from humiliation we come to our senses and confess our faults. When once we have turned in His direction, we are no longer on unexplored

ways. A countless multitude has tried out the promise, "Whosoever will may come," and has found His faithfulness to have no end. Many of us, blind to spiritual truths, are able to see them only after pride is gone and we have the humble attitude of the seeker for Him who telleth the number of the stars and healeth the broken in heart.

As the scientist stands in awe before the undiscovered, as the artist is devoted to the beauty he dreams of creating, so the person who has come to his senses through humiliation is in a position to appreciate spiritual values which he would not otherwise fully see.

There are moral uses for many grievous burdens, and for none more than for humiliation. The cry of the prodigal son, "I have sinned . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son," is the cry of all who have, through humiliation, been brought to their senses. Sin and love are still two of the most powerful mysterious forces operating in the human heart, but in the end it is love that wins the victory, love in a Father calling across long desert miles to bring home his erring sons. Love in that One, the first-born among many brethren, nailed to the cross beneath the blackness of the midnight sky. God is love, and whenever any man comes with his sins red upon his hands and cries out in agony of repentance, there is forgiveness and welcome at the Father's house.

Uses of Weakness

"I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."—*II Corinthians* 12:10.

Weakness is looked upon as a calamity by men of all ages. Nothing so oppresses the spirit of the young; few things so disturb the minds of older people as to discover that strength is failing. Weakness of mind, frailty of disposition, and bodily disability are dreaded, and it is all the more surprising to read Paul's statement: "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Is there any truth in this paradox, this seeming contradiction in terms? What are the uses of these inevitable mishaps, when we feel strength gone from us?

Weakness rids us of *self-righteousness.* The man whom God cannot help is the man who asserts that he is not in need. The man who constantly justifies himself, is armored against love. To those who admit their weakness and come in repentance, and humbly, there is an instantaneous welcome.

In a period of deep humiliation following an outbreak of temper, Stevenson wrote to a close friend:

"I have just had another disagreeable night. It is difficult indeed to steer among the breakers: I am always touching ground; generally, it is my own blame, for I cannot help getting friendly with my father (whom I do love) and so speaking foolishly with my mouth. I have yet to learn in ordinary conversation that reserve and silence that I must try to unlearn in the matter of the feelings." Viewing his weakness and temperamental frailty, he had put away his impulsive self-righteousness. Later he wrote that he had learned "to bless God from the miry clay."

The divine love is like human affection: whenever one person says to another, "I have wronged you grievously; come, let us be friends again"—then arms are wide open. Whenever the boy in the far country comes to his senses and says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," the father runs to meet him in overflowing love and joy.

Several times Jesus met unfortunate women and never did He heap them with abuse. Their acknowledged guilt and penitence were the condition precedent to divine redemption. For Jesus that new state of mind was enough. They were close to the Kingdom; and in their weakness stronger than self-righteous Roman generals and worldly priests, more potent in their degradation than any self-justifying Pharisee.

When one is weak one recognizes one's guilt and

is in a position to be saved. The teacher cannot save the bigoted child from error; friends cannot help self-sufficient people, no matter how great their danger. Even God cannot get at the self-righteous person, one who refuses to respond to friendship and affection.

Men and women who insist that they are always correct in their conclusions are difficult psychological problems. Those who have suffered from accident or disease often have such winning personalities because they are emancipated from the strident, blatant, self-assertive sureness which gets in the way of most of us who are in the bloom of health. When chagrin at being disabled has changed to humility, and when humiliation has done its perfect work and issued in victory, the weak man comes into his strength. He realizes that he cannot ride up to Heaven's gate and demand the harvest of the human spirit—love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, courtesy, patience; these do not come on demand. Rather, with all self-righteousness done away, he opens the doors of his spirit and lets the light from the throne of grace stream in to illumine his darkened soul.

Out of weakness He ordains strength by ridding us of self-righteousness.

Again, weakness rids us of *vanity*. Vanity is one of the last diseases of noble minds. Among the best of mankind it often gets in the way, to blast and ruin and hold up to ridicule a character other-

wise devoted to good purposes. The desire for credit for an idea we have set afloat, the hunger for praise for our own personal prowess of body or mind, the expertness with which we play or sing or take part in some game—these subtle weaknesses attack most of us sometime. If we would only stop to think, we could see the futility of it all, for no matter how clever another person is, it is easy to discern when he is seeking to impress us. It must be equally easy for others to detect our efforts to impress them.

John Milton without adversity would undoubtedly have been a great man, but John Milton in grief and blindness has eternally enriched the spiritual life of the race. Weakness rid him of self-righteousness. That whole realm of values wrapt up in humility, receptiveness and compassion, became in his desolation a companioning reality. Hear him as he cried out, not in bitterness or in dumb resignation, but in acceptance of the majesty of God, triumphing in his spirit over the mystery of suffering:

When I consider how my light is spent
  Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
  And that one talent which is death to hide,
  Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
  My true account, lest he returning chide;
  "Doth God exact day labour, light denied?"
  I fondly ask: but Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Blindness taught Milton to see.

Weakness has a way of disarming us, taking away our self-deception, and helping us to focus life anew, to get objects and values in their proper places. Romain Rolland has Jean Christophe cry out: "No man who has never been ill can have a thorough knowledge of himself."

Vanity spoils so much that is wonderful in life—generous giving, hard and persistent work, brilliant thinking, great devotion, desperate fighting—all have their glory partly dimmed by vanity. In Rostand's great play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Cyrano is dying. He is a great spirit, aflame with life, wit, courage—a free soul, scorning to buy favor by selling his soul, liking rather the hatred of the fawning crown than its fickle love; he will achieve fame by his own wit or win it not at all. As he feels death approaching, he cries out:

"Let no one help me—no one!—
Only the tree . . .
(He sets his back against the trunk.)
"It is coming. . . . I feel
Already shod with marble . . . gloved with lead. . . .
(Joyously)
"Let the old fellow come now! He shall find me
On my feet—sword in hand—"

He draws his sword and lunges at his ancient enemies, Falsehood, Prejudice, Compromise, Cowardice. At last he spies another enemy, the last one.

> "Ah, you too, Vanity!
> I knew you would overthrow me in the end."

Vanity, conquering the best more often than the worst! The malady of daring, effective, courageous men and women, like a rat gnawing at a ship's hawser, releasing her to be driven on the rocks!

If you were to touch upon the greatest fault of Beethoven, it would be vanity. The great creative qualities of the artist led him to be austere and to scorn sincere friendship proffered by humbler men and women. It has been the vice of some of our most illumined statesmen in these recent years; it is one of the most serious opponents to the rule of Christ in any group of people.

The office of weakness is often to drive out vanity. Out of weakness Christ ordains humility, and from humility come insight and knowledge and power. When we are weak, then we are strong.

Finally, weakness rids us of *willfulness*. When Henley, or any one else, shouts to the world that he is a self-contained, completely independent spirit, one begins to wonder if he is not whistling to keep up his courage. There is a sense in which every man must get weaned from home and friends and loved ones, and must stand forth alone to meet the issues

of life, a free and independent spirit. But there is another sense in which every one needs and is seeking for a master, some one who will live when we are but a memory, who will gather up all our discordant efforts into pure harmony, some one who sees the whole plan while we see but a part, some one who will make it possible to face endless difficulty and defeat and still to think the game is worth the price, and in the end be confident of victory.

The man who insists on being completely self-sufficient, fighting through life on his own lines and for his own self, may get some keen pleasure out of life and may give and take in good fashion, but he will fail to know the highest joy of all, that of participation with the Almighty in redeeming men and society. He will not have the assurance of ultimate victory which gradually possesses the soul of the man who is convinced that there is a plan of God for each person and that it is discoverable to the searching soul.

When weakness comes, the independence that knows no allegiance above itself dies away. Our mood becomes such that we are able to merge our wills in His, identify our efforts with His, make His purpose ours. Out of weakness he can call forth dedication. Many never face the issue of whole-hearted participation with God in this present life until they are utterly unable to go forward in their own power. Days of waiting are often days

of consecration to God, who alone can make victory sure and valuable.

A great teacher once wrote regarding the tendency to willfulness, especially among able men: "Why should we hesitate to make the act of enlistment or surrender complete? Just the other side of complete surrender is God and the power of an endless life."

Take it, O Father, ere my courage fail,
And merge it so in thine own will, that e'en
If in some desperate hour my cries prevail
And thou give back my gift, it may have been
So changed, so purified, so fair have grown,
So one with thee, so filled with grace divine,
I may not feel or know it as my own,
But, gaining back my will, may find it thine.

Weakness rids us of self-righteousness, of vanity, and of willfulness, and puts us in the way of dedication. The thorn in the flesh which cannot be removed even by prayer and waiting may be the sign of victory. The emblem of Jesus is still the cross, not an army of marching men. The resources of God are for all men with open and receptive hearts, not alone for the strong, the able, and the brilliant. Indeed, it may be doubted whether any one fully conscious of his brilliancy or his talents is in a mood to appropriate the mind that was in Christ. The God revealed in the Scriptures and in the natural world is a striving, and a suffering, and often because of human blindness at least in some temporary

sense, a frustrated God. No wonder, then, that one who had as much insight as Paul should not want to identify himself with such a struggling divinity presiding over a universe that is groaning and travailing together unto the perfect day; no wonder that he wrote to the self-conscious Corinthians, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

The Struggle with Rampant Impulses

"I delight in the law of God . . . but I see another law in my members. . . . Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—*Romans* 7:23-25.

Across the temple at Delphi are written these words: Knothi Seauton—Know Thyself. When we apply them to our own lives we involuntarily exclaim, "Which self?"

We find ourselves divided. Sir Richmond cries out to his doctor friend, in Wells's story *The Secret Places of the Heart:* "It's as if my will had come untwisted and was raveling out into separate strands. I've lost my unity. I'm not a man, but a mob."

Lord Morley once wrote of Gladstone: "He was 'a Highlander in the custody of a Lowlander.' In his being the idealism and poetry and passion of the northern temperament mingled with a strain of those dour, canny, commercial instincts which belong to so many southern Scotsmen."

We are connected with two spheres of thought, a higher and a lower, a profounder and a shallower, a better and a worse. The one self aspires toward goodness, truth, and beauty; the other leads us, willingly or unwillingly, to egotism, to indulgence, and finally to specious justification.

What are those rampant impulses which divide and make us incompetent to grapple with life?

There is the *desire for credit*. Genuine appreciation is one of the most helpful gifts which we receive from our friends, strengthening, bringing encouragement, and giving one a consciousness of being valued. To feel that one is worth something is the greatest comfort to oppressed and dispirited people. Jesus was constantly taking broken-down souls, people without the pale, and fanning the tiny flame of self-respect and worthiness until it grew into a steady flame. Socially ostracized tax gatherers, humble farmers, lepers, sinners, the abandoned and outcast and lonely, felt the warm creative touch of His love. An answering voice to one seeking friendship, the response of a kindred spirit, an honest word of praise, are transforming powers. But the modest delight which one has in commendation for work well done becomes perverted when we grow hungry for praise. Able men and women vitiate their influence when they become possessed of an insatiable desire for recognition. There may be no outbreaking boorishness, but in many subtle ways we can proclaim ourselves the hero of every action. This passion for praise is all the more dangerous because it is hidden many times even from ourselves.

One sometimes sees a family in which the father is the hero of the household. When he comes home

the little family resolves itself into an audience. The smallest details of the day's exploits are not infrequently recounted. The patient wife now and then puts in a question, as the most pleasant way to keep the tiresome game going. The bulging ego of the head of the house not only makes him more and more selfish but also keeps every one from acting naturally and freely. Wherever this inordinate desire for credit enters a home, in the case of either parents or children, there is a certain pathological accompaniment. The self-made hero gradually comes to be treated like a person mentally ill. The whole home is thrown out of balance by the demand of one person for admiration, while others suffer because of enforced homage and become hypocritical in showing an interest they cannot always feel. People will pay a tribute of honor and praise when it is demanded by some one whom they hold dear, but it will not be the spontaneous acclamation of the heart.

This overweening desire for personal recognition makes one use many devious means to create a reputation. Oftentimes the desire for credit goes beyond egotism and makes one a masquerader. Assumption of credit for some good act attributed to us by a mistake will start one on a train of further masquerading, one false step leading to another until one is brazenly lying to maintain a position. Or, one may find that certain favors can be gained only

if people have a high opinion of us, and we find ourselves strangely skillful in taking advantage of every break of circumstance in our favor. When one sits down with oneself and faces the masquerader which is one's other self, one is forced to agree with Paul and say: "The good that I would I do not."

We find ourselves morally scattered because of the lust for the praise of men's lips.

Or, again, we become divided in our souls on account of the desire for *physical comforts*. Recently an editor of a magazine expressed the view that at least half of the first-rate men he knew had made some sort of moral compromise with themselves in order to obtain creature comforts. He spoke of the hypocrisy that settles down over a man, naturally frank and enthusiastic, who puts aside his real nature in order to make himself fit into the particular groups whose favor means wealth. Gradually the heroic and independent parts of himself are crowded out—the man is no longer a free spirit.

There is something about this compromising procedure which is peculiar. It does not run in perpendicular compartments of life, leaving others free; it runs horizontally. Let a man be defeated in one line and it colors his whole life. Let a man be dishonest or impure or deceitful and there develops an overspreading sense of uneasiness that loses for him his spiritual unity. The conflict within an unsettled heart haunts the whole life.

One of the obsessions of present-day civilization is the dread of poverty. Any man who wishes to be heroic and free must be willing to be poor. Not long ago a man urged young people to enlist in Christian service, because it would be to their advantage in a business way. Paul speaks of men who teach a different doctrine than the way of Christ, "supposing that godliness is a way of gain." When personal gain is the sole or the greatest motive for good works, life becomes organized on an artificial basis; it is only when goodness becomes liberated from material attachments that it swings into the realm of greatness. Goodness has no relation to market value, any more than has art. It is true that we sell pictures or music for such and such a price, but that has nothing to do with the real valuation. A rag-time song copyright may sell for twenty thousand dollars and Beethoven's *Mount of Olives* for a few kronen, but such prices are no index of the value of either. The manuscript of Lloyd George's war memoirs sold for four hundred and fifty thousand dollars, while Milton was glad to accept an offer of twenty-five pounds for *Paradise Lost*—and never received even that small amount. Material rewards for greatness are necessarily haphazard, it being impossible to measure incommensurables. Money or land or power is no measure for goodness. It is impossible to measure potatoes by a yardstick, they must be measured by the bushel.

You cannot measure love and beauty and godliness by the price they bring, but by spiritual appreciation. The artistic or the intellectual or the ethical conscience is each aware of standards of value for which we have no metric equivalent. Goodness is an end in itself, to which rewards have no relationship. Gradually, step by step, rewards fill our gaze and goodness is forgotten. We cannot serve two masters.

We become divided inwardly because we make security and comfort in life the object of our great desires, losing sight of the infinitely greater gifts which cannot be earned but which God bestows gratuitiously upon the earnest and receptive heart.

Again, our souls become diffuse not only through the desire for credit and the longing for creature comforts, but also because of *cowardice*.

In the animal world there is a phenomenon called protective coloring. A bird whose habitat has been for centuries the moorlands of West Scotland will take on the greenish gray tints of the heather; a grasshopper disguises himself as a twig; the butterfly hides himself in the color of the flowers he visits; the leopard's spots and tawny hide camouflage him in the brown grass of the plain. These disguises are the device of Nature to conceal her creatures from each other. Men and women also wear disguises as a protection against discovery by their neighbors and friends. We do not like others to know what we

are thinking, and often we love the darkness we artificially create because our deeds are evil. It is so easy to assume the color and texture of our spiritual environs, which are neither natural nor innocent. To use a phrase in the Gospels, we seek "how we may conveniently betray Him." When we become especially sensitive to the atmosphere in which we move we can do well to ask ourselves, "Is it fear that makes me so?"

Dreading the shock of disagreement, we protect ourselves socially to avoid embarrassment, tacitly assenting to current practices regarding drink, divorce, war, and social customs, as a spiritual protective coloring. We flee the heat and friction of asserting the truth, but we only gain a troubled conscience. We are aware of the inner conflict. Our souls cannot lie down in peace in the face of the compromise and our hearts become the battleground of diverse emotions. Men and women grow old and sorrowful, oftentimes not because they have done heavy work or borne great hardships, but because they have carried an armed truce in their hearts for years. They have used up the resources of their spiritual nature by fighting their own battles over and over again. They could say with Sir Richmond, "I'm no longer a man, but a mob."

We find about us and within us these spiritual capitulations because of a lack of courage to stand up against the shock of adverse sentiment. We sin

by silence and become more and more timid, inhibited by our unlovely fears. Our lesser selves are always standing by to whisper in our ears: "Don't be absurd," "don't be a prude," "why object to what seems to others an innocent pastime?", "why should you refrain when others indulge?", "who made you a judge and a divider over the rest of us?", and gradually we yield here a little and there a bit, until the lesser self is in the saddle and our better self lies slain by our own hand and troubles us no more.

We face, then, these three rampant impulses within our souls—the desire for credit, the longing for physical comforts, and cowardice. Where does the Christian religion come in to bring unity, to change this mob within us into a unified personality faced toward God?

There are two things that are familiar to us all. First, Christ insists that our truest natures are our *best selves.* The attitude of the stranger toward the cheating old landlady in Jerome K. Jerome's play, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* is a revelation of the creative power of love and respect. The stranger insisted on regarding Mrs. Pennycherry as a lady born and bred, compelled by circumstances over which she had no control to fill an arduous position. She was to him a foster-mother to whom thanks were due. Once this idea of what she might be had dawned upon her, Mrs. Penny-

cherry clung to it with obstinate conviction. "A lady born and bred cannot charge other ladies and gentlemen for coals and candles they have never burnt; a foster-mother cannot palm off on her children New Zealand mutton for Southdown. A mere lodging-house keeper can play these tricks and pocket the profits, but a lady cannot. Mrs. Pennycherry felt that she no longer could." The boundless trust Christ puts in us compels us to play up and do our best. Paul writes, "For the love of Christ constraineth us"; we are compelled men.

The second thing God does is to remind us by the voice of conscience to choose the high road instead of the low. Conscience speaks often for decades to men and women, but there comes the time when it ceases and leaves one like a derelict schooner on which all hands have died of yellow fever, plunging forward without guidance, with no eye on the compass and no hand on the wheel. Conscience can be neglected until it troubles us no more.

By the never failing confidence of God that our better selves are our truer selves and by the inward voice that says day by day, to do better, and to be nobler, we lose our falseness and hypocrisy.

Generations of burdened men and women, divided by rampant impulses and obsessed with vanity, greed, and fear, have cried out, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and have been able to answer, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Experience of Bitterness

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter."—*Exodus* 15:23.

Moses was a hard-pressed man. He had accepted leadership only after long persuasion on the part of the Lord. He had come through years of dreary toil as a sheep-herder in Midian, he had faced ambassadors and kings in Egypt, dullness and unbelief on the part of the people; and throughout his experiences he was conscious of his weakness. Nevertheless the Lord had encouraged him, for He had promised Moses: "Certainly I will be with thee: and this shall be a sign unto thee, that I have sent thee." He had made his escape with the people across the plains of the Egyptian delta, had passed through the Red Sea in safety, and stood on the borders of the Promised Land. At last the children of Israel were to inherit the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So they marched in the direction of the Jordan valley for three days and found no water, and when they did come upon a spring it was bitter. Here is an experience: promises, hopes, plans, efforts, and—bitterness!

Does God place bitter springs in our pathway to test us, or do we get enough testing without gratuitous hardships? Many feel that God, like a great

artist, puts a touch of ugliness in life now and then to enhance the beauty of the picture, in much the same way as cathedral builders thrust an ugly gargoyle from some soaring tower or carve a hideous lizard upon a column to heighten the harmony of the restrained and decorous architecture. At any rate, we encounter ugly and bitter experiences in life.

Bitterness comes to many through the *untoward circumstances* of life.

Some are overborne by the incidental hardships such as illness, pain, unemployment and the desolation of bereavement and loneliness.

Franklin K. Lane, in a letter to Adolph C. Miller, said: "I rebel at sickness as much as I do at death. The scheme of existence does not appeal to me, at the moment, as the most perfect which a highly imaginative Creator could have invented. My transcendental philosophy seems a pretty good working article when things are going smoothly, but it is not quite equal to hard, practical strain, I fear."

In Margaret Prescott Montague's remarkable story, *Deep Channel*, the sensitive little Julie is conversing with her father, who knows that he is stricken:

> Julie's heart jumped violently. "What's got you, pappey, honey?' she questioned, putting her hand in his.
>
> "Life," he answered. "It's got me down at last. I allus knew it would. It gets every feller in the end. I stood up against it an' fought it like a two fisted man, but it got

me, an' now I'll just have to lay down on you women folks; don't tell mammy, she's scary enough anyway."

It is the same sort of cry that the drunken father of Anna Christie put up in Eugene O'Neill's play: "It's the Sea that's got me, the old Devil Sea." Moral failure, wrong choices, misdeeds, the results of riotous living in far countries, are blamed upon life or the sea, upon anonymous frustrating spirits which seem always active. It is an easy and convenient practice. Is there any one who has not pitied himself and said: "If I had had a better early training, if my parents had been more careful of me, if I had had a better job, a more heroic or appreciative companion, a more understanding superior, or a better disposition or temperament, things would be different, the world would be happier, and I could make a go of it; but now the cards are stacked against me." We all confront these bitter moments.

But life was not meant to end in bitterness. Our goal is not a shoal of miseries or failure, even with adequate excuses. It is life, rich, sweet, abundant life, in scorn of consequence, in the face of sorrow, defeat, sickness, death, or any other creature, which is our quest. If religion cannot bring one through eventually with exceeding great joy and sweetness, there is something wrong with religion or with our approach to it.

Hopes, plans, efforts, bitterness—yes, but that is

not all! There remained the adequacy of God to sweeten the water and stay by His people in their time of thirst.

Rufus Jones recounts how a friend salvaged a rich and abundant life out of an apparently irretrievable disaster: "My friend was very highly gifted and was at the time just beginning to reveal unusual literary powers and he was at the opening stage of a promising career in business. At the same time he was coming to be recognized as the spiritual leader of the younger section of his religious fellowship. Everything which makes life rich and great was before him. The doctor gravely and with almost killing frankness told him that he was the victim of a subtle and baffling disease which would destroy his hearing and his sight and would eventually seriously affect his memory. He came down the stairs of the doctor's office and stood almost stunned on the curb of the street, realizing that all the large plans for his life had collapsed like a child's house of blocks. Suddenly as he stood there, waiting to decide which way to go, he felt as though he was enveloped by the invading love of God and filled with a sense of unutterable peace. There emerged within him a source of energy sufficient to turn his primary tendency to despair into a steady consciousness of hope and joy which lasted throughout his life and gave him extraordinary power and influence." Religion does not end on Good Friday,

but is consummated on Easter Day. The cross is not the only fact in the life of Christ; the crowning glory of His life was that He passed through Good Friday to the resurrection morning. "To grasp life's nettle," as Von Hügel put it, to take a bitter situation and to sweeten it, is the task of a Christian. God does not promise ease or give assurance of immediate victory. He does promise to be with us and to give us courage and to save everything of value, no matter how great or terrible the crash may be.

Many face bitterness in untoward circumstances of their work. We enter a position with high hopes; be it a profession, a calling, a position, or a job, it is all the same. We see promotion, advancement, a chance to be generous, kind, perhaps to have a little more of the creature comforts of life, and then we strike the spring of bitter water. There is generally some one person who stands in the way by an attitude, or superior ability, or any one of a dozen familiar qualities. Our thirsty lives experience bitterness. Will we, then, in that place where our work lies, play the hero or the coward? Will we seek to sweeten the bitter waters there? It will strain us to the limit of our capacities, to be sure. But the assurances of God run to us as they did to Moses: "I will be with thee"—to sweeten all these bitter springs.

The harshness and brutality of everyday life

crush the better natures of an unnumbered host who go down in cynicism and disillusionment, confusing worldly material rewards for those inward satisfactions which are the assurance of those who walk by the spirit.

Bitterness often comes through reflecting upon the unjust organization of modern society.

But the real artist or the genuine saint or patriot does not withdraw from ugly surroundings to do his work. One man sees greasy, misty London river, reeking with oil and dirty, teeming with sooty barges and grimy men; but Whistler and Kasimir saw a glorious river and scratched on their copper plates a London bridge, barges of black coal, and fantastic steel cranes, in a manner that made the whole river a thing of beauty. There are the facts and the interpretation of the facts. Children sometimes play with a celluloid device that can be placed over a picture and eradicate certain lines, and with another that can put certain lines in. People's outlook on life is like that: some perpetually see the grimy, greasy, deceitful, dirty aspect of life, and others can see through the soot and murk the lines and the form that are beauty itself.

But, some will say, there are many bitter situations which are not to be eradicated by any one's glasses, colored or otherwise, and what are we to do in such cases? Some situations are so bitter that one can do only one thing—cast about, as

Moses did, for a way to alter their entire nature.

One of the poignant problems before every civilized nation is to evangelize the new industrial order, to prevent capital and labor grinding the average citizen to bits between the upper and nether millstone. The rampant demands of labor nor the Tory denunciations of capital are Christian. But from that thoughtful group among both the organized workers and the organized capitalists there will come those who, seeing the travail of humanity in this armed truce broken by intermittent warfare, shall give us more ample concepts in the realm of ideals for work, profit sharing, and control. Be it said to the credit of many capitalists and of many labor leaders that they have already been pioneering the way of a more adequate industrial system.

Bolton Hall stated a sardonic philosophy which will never work, when he wrote:

Have the Trusts devoured your Pay?
  Laugh it off.
Do they cheat you night and day?
  Laugh it off.
Don't make tragedy of trifles,
Don't shoot butterflies with rifles—
  Laugh it off.

Has the Landlord raised your rent?
  Laugh it off.
Have you spent your bottom cent?
  Laugh it off.
If it's sanity you're after,
There's no recipe like laughter—
  Laugh it off.

But some aspects of life go too deep to be laughed off—wages, home, love, children, school, a decent standard of living—these are problems that can be laughed about only when they are settled rightly. Slavery was never settled by The Fugitive Slave Law and the Missouri Compromise, it is only half settled to-day. It cannot be laughed off. Prohibition and imperialism and ecclesiastical bigotry cannot be laughed off. They must be settled rightly. There is still much that is unjust in the organization of society.

William Lloyd Garrison is an example of a citizen who refused to consent unto the unchristian practices of his day. In 1830 he faced a North whose pulse beat slowly, which was blind to an issue which cried aloud for settlement, whether the Union could be preserved part slave and part free, whether it was right to treat human souls like cattle. The North was asleep, just as the conscience of the modern world is asleep on the war issue. The South was on the defensive and bolstered its position on slavery with reasons which the vast majority of the South has long since given over. Garrison tasted of the bitterness of the whole situation and gave himself to changing it. In the first issue of *The Liberator* which he published on January 1, 1831, he stated: "I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there no cause for severity? I will be harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as

justice. On this subject I do not wish to think or speak or write, with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother gradually to extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen:—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead." This man was mobbed by the mayor and the best people of Boston for his pains, but he persisted. He slept on the table in his cellar printing office and he became in the next thirty years the greatest single force in bringing about the abolition of human slavery in North America. He saw an insufferably bitter situation and he helped to sweeten it with his whole might. In spite of being mobbed and almost hung many times, it is difficult to imagine a more happy man than William Lloyd Garrison.

We are bitter because of the unethical organization of society.

We also grow cynical *because of the devastation within our own hearts.* When the only pool from which we must drink is brackish, we are hard put to it. When a man calls upon his inner resources

and finds nothing there, when he is conscious of inappropriate speech and attitudes, he often goes further in the way of confusion and becomes ill-tempered. Ill-temper is extremely significant, not so much for what it is in itself but for what it reveals. As Henry Drummond was wont to put it: "It is the intermittent fever which tells of unintermittent disease; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface, betraying the rottenness underneath; a hastily prepared specimen of the hidden products of the soul, dropped involuntarily when you are off your guard." Ill-temper is the evidence of a dozen hideous and unchristian sins. Drummond also said: "One of the first things to startle us—leaving aside mere definition—about sins of the temper, is their strange compatibility with high moral character. The elder brother, without doubt, was a man of high principle."

When a man sours within his heart he gives forth sour conversation and a sour countenance, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Why is it that so many of us who have put our feet on the path that leads to a better life allow our best efforts to be frustrated by the blight of ill-temper?

Again many of us grow bitter because we are fighting the highest call of God for our lives and like Paul, we are "kicking against the good" of our own better judgment and we find ourselves a bun-

dle of conflicts. The man likeliest to get embittered is the man who is fighting a call to a higher life. There is only one way to sweeten a situation like that—to acknowledge the leadership of the Divine Spirit, to subject oneself to His influence, to serve Him to the best of one's talents, to enter into a benign conspiracy with Him to redeem one's own personality from hell and be able to help another when the springs of life turn bitter.

Christina Rossetti, tasting the bitterness of self-defeat, feeling the ache and pain of constant humiliation because of the unconquered and unevangelized areas within her own heart, exclaimed:

God strengthen me to bear myself;
That heaviest weight of all to bear,
Inalienable weight of care.

All others are outside myself;
I lock my door and bar them out,
The turmoil, tedium, gad-about.

I lock my door upon myself,
And bar them out; but who shall wall
Self from myself, most loathed of all?

If I could once lay down myself,
And start self-purged upon the race
That all must run! Death runs apace.

If I could set aside myself,
And start with lightened heart upon
The road by all men overgone!

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease, and rest, and joys;

Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.

Yet One there is can curb myself,
Can roll the strangling load from me,
Break off the yoke and set me free.

Somewhere between the promise made by God to you for your life and your Promised Land lie the springs of Marah. To be beyond exasperation, where bitterness cannot come, is perhaps too much to ask in a world where each must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but there is always the adequacy of God to clear the spring of its brackish and bitter taste.

The bitter spring may be sweetened by some good friend who will listen while we pour out our woe, or it may come gratuitously as a gift of God. At any rate, we awake some day to find the old trouble gone; life is sweet again. We could cry out with the sensitive soul of whom Miss Montague wrote: "We've broke through, we've broke through, O my Lord! We've broke through! Freedom—freedom! There ain't nothin' big enough to hold it. Shout, you mourners, you shall be free,—free in the Lord! the deep channel! the deep channel! We ain't hung up in the shallers no more—the jam's broke and we're out in the deep channel of the river, traveling free in the peace of the Lord."

How many of us need to feel that,—"traveling

free in the peace of the Lord!" To be free at a thousand junctures where men go bitter, to have a heart that just cannot be gotten at by the cuts and slights which a great heart can forgive—to be in the deep channel—to be free in the Lord—that indeed is the life!

Promises, hopes, plans, the long hard marches, and then the bitter springs to parched lips! But there were resources in God then to clear up the bitterness, and there are to-day. He who bears one up on the march and who plants fair dreams in our hearts, who knows His own by name, will not fail us after we are through the crisis—the Red Sea and the great deserts of life—but will bear us also beyond the bitter waters which often lie on the very border of our Promised Land.

The Thorn in the Flesh

"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh."—*II Corinthians* 12:7.

One of the extraordinary characteristics of Paul was the number of burdens he could bear. He had been shipwrecked thrice, a night and a day he had spent in the deep, he had been beaten by robbers, five times he had received forty stripes save one, and so hotly was he set upon that he had been let down over the wall at Damascus in a basket to escape his pursuers. He had lived as a hunted, poverty-stricken evangelist, cruising about the littoral of the Eastern Mediterranean and taking considerable journeys inland in Greece and Asia Minor and lower Italy. The mishaps of the road and the fortunes of wind and tide had not treated him gently. It is significant that out of his various disappointments with men, out of the many incidents that had crushed his sensibilities, he could pick out one particular poignant element and above all his other calamities call that his "thorn in the flesh." He was not complaining, but in seeking to communicate to friends at Corinth his philosophy of dealing with this persistent nettle, he spoke of three aspects of this experience.

The first aspect was the *existence* of the vexation. Paul was a well-known figure among some dozens

of Christian centers, and probably those who saw this hardy evangelist preaching by the sea at Antioch, or in the amphitheater at Smyrna, or in the place of assembly at Athens, never dreamed that he too had a peculiar, personal, private grief—something so searching in its pain and so constant in its sting that Paul said: "There was given unto me a thorn in the flesh." If he had sat down with the philosophers at Athens and told them of his secret bitterness, they would perhaps have cried out: "I never knew that." He was a sportsman who ran true to form. He did not whine about his maladies or parade his causes for complaint, but pushed on. Even he, mail-clad pioneer of the spirit, knew a sorrow which no other heart could share, knew a woe too deep for any but God to assuage.

One who had pondered deeply over the thorn in the flesh has written:

> We suffer. Why we suffer,—that is hid
> With God's foreknowledge in the clouds of Heaven.
> The first book written sends that human cry
> Out of the clear Chaldean pasture-lands
> Down forty centuries; and no answer yet
> Is found, nor will be found, while yet we live
> In limitations of Humanity.
> But yet one thought has often stayed by me
> In the night-watches, which has brought at least
> The patience for the hour, and made the pain
> No more a burden which I groaned to leave,
> But something precious which I feared to lose.
> —How shall I show it, but by parables?

The sculptor, with his Psyche's wings half-hewn
May close his eyes in weariness, and wake
To meet the white cold clay of his ideal
Flushed into beating life, and singing down
The ways of Paradise. The husbandman
May leave the golden fruitage of his groves
Ungarnered, and upon the Tree of Life
Will find a richer harvest waiting him.
The soldier dying thinks upon his bride,
And knows his arms shall never clasp her more,
Until he first the face of his unborn child
Behold in heaven: for each and all of life,
In every phase of action, love, and joy,
There is fulfillment only otherwhere.—

In the reminiscent mood which sometimes settles over one when writing to one's closest friends, Paul waxed autobiographical and told his friends that his heart too knew its own bitterness, that he too had a thorn in the flesh.

The second part of this experience was Paul's *response* to his secret sorrow. "For this thing," he said, "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me."

Burdens of the mind and of the flesh spring from too many obscure sources in human life to be easily dismissed. There is much suffering due to the kind of world in which we live, there is anguish due to freedom of choice, there are disease germs, and accidents due to mistakes of judgment, there is suffering voluntarily undertaken to win others to a better and a nobler life. But Paul is speaking here of still another category, the disciplinary processes of

pain. You remember that Thompson, the Irish poet, cried out in his affliction:

> Must Thou, Designer Infinite, char the wood
> Ere Thou canst limn with it?

It seems sometimes that only affliction can refine a spirit so that it can be used of God.

Paul was a wise man, but he knew he had no easy remedy for his thorn in the flesh. His response was to entreat the Lord three times, but the thorn did not disappear.

A prominent professor in an eastern college recently wrote to a friend who was vexed with doubts and troubles because of a painful illness in the family: "I know only too well what you are passing through. Neither Father nor Mother could stand it to watch my brother as his life ebbed away. Just about this time twenty years ago I was with him. It was in those hours that I solved my attitude toward the problem of evil—not that I have solved the problem—I did not, and never expect to. But the practical thing for us is our attitude toward it. At first I was rebellious; and then one night I went out upon the Yale Campus and walked alone under the stars. I just gave up Alfred 100 per cent over to God and received the sure conviction that he was not going to get well, but with it came an assurance of the shortsightedness of most people's attitude toward life and suffering. I have an idea

that evil and illness are due to other people's sins up the line, or in the creation of environment, but that when they come to realize it in the next world our vicarious sacrifice in some way secures for them a release from remorse and a chance to progress which somehow they could never obtain if we did not suffer unreservedly. But I have the other conviction that this suffering of ours is not efficacious unless our attitude toward it is right—unless we give it fully and freely. So the only conflict to me in my own experience with suffering in 1912-1913 was the feeling that the battered soul of my drunken grandfather was somehow profiting by it and that I was helping him, in the next world, to get back to the stature of a man when I took on myself the hereditary or environmental penalty of his sins."

Neither Paul nor this man of modern times was able to understand the full meaning of tribulation. Each had it, and each found that the important thing was his response to it. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." Neither understood the meaning of his personal affliction; neither had a solution for the problem of evil; neither had a glib explanation of the dark sides of life. When affliction came they besought the Lord thrice for it to pass, but continued to believe even when it did not leave them. There lies the acid test of faith. The greatness of Moses

lay in the fact that he still found faith credible when he knew he should never see the Promised Land. Paul responded to his persistent vexation with a steady, irresistible faith that said as truly as Job said it: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Paul made a correct response, even though he could not suggest a complete solution.

The third aspect of Paul's experience was the coming of *divine reënforcement.*

"He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, than am I strong."

Not every one hears the voice of God in such clear tones saying, "My strength is sufficient for thee." But here and there the messages of divine assurance do

> Present themselves as objects recognized,
> In flashes, and with glory not their own.

The soul awakened to a keen sense of pain or perplexity or confusion will find enough to lay hold on, enough to give assurance of what lies behind, enough light to walk by, even though it be but a single step—something revealed not completely, but

in flashes. When a man feels that there is a special resource for his special perplexity, then it is that the reserves of God seem available for him.

Paul was touching upon one of the most arresting paradoxes in Christianity, in his interpretation of divine reënforcement: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Why is it that his strength and succor did not come some other way—by arms and battle and effort, if you please? Partly because men can only see truth rightly in humility; partly because the old ego is banished only in the absence of strength, with all its temptations to pride and arrogance and bigotry; partly because in affliction one turns to ultimate things, to what one considers most important and necessary. Jesus did not need to explain humility and purity to the woman at the well; He did not have to waste time in making clear to the dishonest Zacchæus the meaning of honesty. In their humiliation and moral infirmity, realizing their condition, it was but a step to the realities of the spirit—honesty, moral cleanness, unselfishness, loving kindness.

In our long struggle up from the primordial ooze we have learned fairly well how to act in adversity, but we have not yet achieved a mind capable of standing affluence and success. The subtle influence of wealth and caste twists and distorts the moral judgment of even the soberest people. From per-

sonalities disciplined by stern realities comes the assurance of divine reënforcements.

Paul was writing of an experience common to most spiritual men and women. Each has a personal, private, individual sting in life, each attempts by such light as he has to respond to God in the face of this tribulation, each discovers that in his own might he cannot achieve fullness of life, but in yielding himself in his infirmity to the divine wishes and in finding Him who takes ordinary imperfect men and women and makes perfect their weakness unto Himself.

The Burden of Unnamed Perplexities

"I have been in danger from rivers and robbers, in danger from Jews and Gentiles, through dangers of town and of desert, through dangers on the sea, through dangers among false brothers—through labor and hardship, through many a sleepless night, through hunger and thirst, starving many a time, cold and ill-clad, and all the rest of it."—*II Corinthians* 11:26-28.

In the biographical chapters of II Corinthians Paul sets forth the long catalogue of his adventures and hardships. He had suffered from perils by the heathen, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils of false brethren. When he had finished the long and poignant list, few could dispute that he had paid a heavy price for his apostleship. After a detailed account of his dangers and trials, Paul names another category of afflictions: "I have been in danger from rivers and robbers . . . through dangers of town and of desert . . . through labor and hardship, through many a sleepless night, through hunger and thirst, starving many a time, cold and ill-clad, *and all the rest of it*." Here was a general omnibus clause, to describe the unnamed afflictions to which Paul had been a victim.

It was typical of both Jesus and Paul that they sought constantly to fortify their followers against that vast anonymity we call life more than against

any one particular ill. Both were convinced that a loving Heavenly Father who cared for each of His children and called them all by name had a special resource for each need. Here is the persistent irritation of which no one is aware, save the sufferer, here is the secret temperamental disability which must be overcome daily, here is an additional burden which seems more than human strength can bear. Friends and those within the home generally apply splints and helps for broken bones and visible obvious afflictions, but only God, who sees the invisible, can furnish splints for broken spirits and healing for crushed sensibilities.

What are these annoyances which Paul means by the phrase "all the rest of it," and can they be met by any resources at our command?

They consist partly in *disabilities.*

In Central Idaho there are no railroads over a territory covering many hundreds of square miles. The hauling of lumber, ore, and wool has to be done by six-horse teams over difficult mountain roads. The horses are under the most severe strain from six to ten hours a day. Drivers do not fear major accidents, but they dread above all else tiny galls upon the shoulders or small bruises on the frogs of the hoofs, which would make them flinch from the hard roads and render useless an otherwise perfect horse. Many persons can sustain severe and continued loads, but are rendered useless by

tiny galls which make work one long agony, or by reason of small bruises they find the way of life too hard. These incidental hardships are what Paul was referring to when he said he had borne many sorts of suffering and "all the rest of it,"—obscure crises and hidden pain which lie beneath an unbroken exterior.

Martin Luther, one of the few men in the last two thousand years who has profoundly changed the course of human history, a man who stood fast under the combined onslaught of the Pope and the hierarchy, was beset in his old age by a multitude of small afflictions. He cried out in the midst of his troubles: "I am utterly weary of life. I pray the Lord will come forthwith and deliver me hence." The Electress Dowager said to him one day that she hoped he might live forty years more. "Madam," he replied, "rather than live forty years more I would give up my chance in Paradise." A number of minor disabilities, disappointments, and cares had caused life to be an intolerable burden to one who a few years before had rushed from one great task to another with insatiable eagerness.

Few of us have perfect bodies, and most of us have to wrest interest from life and contribute service to it with only a fair amount of physical health. But do we not have enough if we make the most of it? A professor, recounting the experience of an explosion in a laboratory which instantly destroyed

his eyesight, said that as soon as the accident occurred his mind flashed like lightning to a definite and complete plan of future usefulness as a blind man, a plan which he had since followed out. If he could not have the first, he would have the second best.

A perfect body will never come to most of us. With the aid of our good friends, the doctors, our work will have to be done in such bodies as we now have. After Paul had recounted all the ills and perils he had suffered and was suffering, he mentioned the thorn in the flesh of which he could not rid himself, and then burst forth in a confession of faith: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me: my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Or who does not have temperamental handicaps? Does not every one have daily humiliations, when brave purposes crumble beneath the onslaught of aggravating circumstance? Many have enjoyed the delights of a sail in a spanking breeze, with a mast bending over a leaping catboat, only to experience trouble in coming in by having the keel drag in the mud. Many experience the exhilaration of a high purpose to keep sweet at home or in business, only to find themselves slowed up by the friction of opposition caused by contrary ideas or the unresponsiveness of others, often caused by fatigue and for-

givable preoccupation. We are always touching ground; eager to do well, we face daily humiliation.

Nevertheless, in the midst of temperamental disabilities, a receptive heart can find strength made perfect in weakness, turning instinctively as a hungry man toward an outside source of abundant strength and help.

Or, in addition to certain disabilities, consider the *vexations* one must undergo.

Discouragement dogs the steps of even the finest spirits. A great novelist exclaimed in the midst of his dark days: "I don't know what to do—the world goes hopelessly around me: there is no moral possibility of doing, living, being anything but a *beast* and there is the end of it." Later he wrote: "I have given up all hope, all fancy rather, of making literature my life work; I see that I have not capacity enough." This was the man who wrote *The Merry Men* and *Treasure Island*! It was only when weakness came that the riches of his spirit flowed forth to bless countless readers. All brave spirits have been followed by discouragement. Because they have hoped greatly they are capable of extreme suffering upon the failure of their aspirations. Even Jesus passed through black hours when His closest friends slept in that hour of anguish when, alone in the garden, He appraised His work, Himself and the possibilities of His cause carrying on after He should be done to death. He was discouraged, but

He did not despair, forsaken and yet supremely Himself.

Again, there are little daily failures in our inability to live up to self-imposed standards. Resolutions are registered which only we and God know and, as we break them one after another, we find our self-respect oozing away until we wake up some morning and find we do not respect ourselves at all. We face the enigma, shall we set standards so low that we can live up to them or shall we place our ideals so high that we run the risk of complete loss of self-esteem because we cannot attain them? Nobility and enhancement of life always lie in the direction of placing before ourselves impossible and, in some senses, intolerable ideals, to let them beckon and sometimes torture us. Respect does not depend upon perfect performance but upon evaluation of the struggle. We need to respect ourselves and hate ourselves at the same time. A friend loves us and forgives us, but also despises our sin and pettiness. Persistent failure is a constant source of vexation.

Temperamental incompatibility is not only the cause of divorce but is also the chief source of unhappiness in offices, shops, homes and upon farms. Xanthippe's scolding got on the nerves of even the patient Socrates. Nagging wives and over-critical husbands, superior attitudes even cleverly displayed, the knowing person's gentle contempt of the unschooled, the scorn of the sophisticated for the rus-

tic, the disdain of the active executive type for the contemplative, are temperamental problems which face every human life. To achieve decorum, dignity and sweetness in these situations is not easy and Divine resources are only available for those who, recognizing the humiliation of their weakness of character, cry out to God for strength and understanding and new reserves of patience.

A large part of the burden of life lies in the vexatious circumstances of discouragement, failure, and temperamental incompatibilities.

Or again, take the *extra burdens* for which we need divine reënforcement. The extra burden of physical or intellectual work above and beyond the usual load, or beyond the line of duty, staggers many who are already tired out. Can we hear in this situation the voice from the unseen saying, "Stand fast; my strength is made perfect in weakness"?

All about us are unseen and unnoticed crises and obscure catastrophes which call for courage and strength above and beyond our usual powers. A newspaper depicts such a one in all its poignancy:

> The little shop has closed its door again.
> It opened with a flourish—souvenirs!
> For ladies, fans; and free cigars for men;
> But now the rent is sadly in arrears.
>
> The family strove with all its puny might
> To put to shame the efforts of the bees;
> The business day concluded late at night;
> And never was such eagerness to please.

It was indeed a gay and friendly group
  That sought your best opinion every day,
On what to do for tiny Joey's croup,
  And if you thought a paper route would pay.

There were, perhaps, too many mouths to fill;
  The youngsters seemed their only staple line;
And pennies must come quick to any till
  Where junior partners total up to nine.

It was, of course, a commonplace affair—
  The futile tug at ends that could not meet;
A little venture lost, with few to care—
  And yet it hurts to see them on the street.

These quiet extinctions of hopes and these unheralded disappointments call for every reserve of courage and of faith.

Not infrequently, too, there come upon us added loads of care, not only in the obvious material things but also for the faith of people. Sometimes by sheer grit we can crowd our ugly doubts and questionings back into the recesses of our minds and refuse to let them come out, but you cannot do so with another's perplexity. Some one may in a few short sentences lay before you an enigma you cannot solve, place upon your hands a hopelessly damaged situation that no one can remedy—bitterness, sorrow, domestic discord, unemployment. How to furnish a strong hand to some one in desperate need, to reveal to another reasons for faith when he is in utter darkness, is a sharp question. The biggest demands made upon us are not those for personal fortitude but often for steeling another to bear misun-

derstanding, or renunciation, or to struggle manfully with doubt.

The Bible reveals God as a specialist in dealing with a weak and faulty human race. We are all weak and in a sense there is no health in us.

Here are some of the human problems which Paul summed up in his phrase, "all the rest of it"—physical and temperamental disabilities which only we may know, vexations of discouragement and failure, extra burdens of work and responsibility, and care for the faith of others. In all these cases, when human resources fail we go back to God, as did Paul. He alone can say to those without resource, whose only possessions are a life full of problems, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

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